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EVENTS OF THE WEEK

THREE days of animated discussion in Committees and a full-dress debate in the League Assembly have produced a singularly invertebrate resolution on disarmament. The shadow of the Anglo-French compromise and its repercussion in the United States hung over the whole proceedings and reduced them to futility. The Assembly urges the necessity of "accomplishing the first step towards the reduction of armaments" as soon as possible; notes with satisfaction the efforts of certain Governments to prepare the ground; expresses the hope that they will be able to compose their differences; and proposes that the President of the Preparatory Commission should keep in touch with those Governments, so that he may be able to convene the Commission, at latest, at the beginning of next year. Nothing is said as to what action M. Loudon is to take if the Powers concerned have failed to agree on a working basis before 1929. No one supposes that agreement will then be reached. It is no wonder that the debates were animated and that the representatives of Germany and Hungary—States already disarmed—refrained from voting.

* * *

The British delegation's chief contribution to the discussion was a plea for leaving the work of the Preparatory Commission in suspense, pending the conclusion of the naval negotiations. We know now what chance there is of these negotiations leading to agreement. The Hearst Press has printed the text of a circular letter from the Quai d'Orsay to French Ambassadors, giving what is admitted to be a correct sum-

mary of the naval compromise. Its terms are almost as bad as they could be. It is proposed to limit the construction of cruisers armed with 8-inch guns, but to leave unrestricted the building of all cruisers armed with lighter weapons. That is to say, it limits the one class of cruisers the United States Navy Board proposes to build, and leaves unrestricted the smaller cruisers, armed with 6-inch guns, in which they have no interest. We comment, in a leading article, on the extraordinary folly of antagonizing the United States by putting forward a proposal to which there is no chance of Washington agreeing, and which will enormously strengthen the hands of the Big Navy Group; and from its repercussions on American opinion, insistence on this formula can only put off to the Greek Kalends the prospect of effective work by the Preparatory Commission in "accomplishing the first step towards the reduction of armaments."

* * *

It is true that the formula is proposed only as a basis of discussion; but a proposal that runs so strongly counter to the main American contentions at Geneva, can only stiffen the attitude of Washington towards any departure from its own formula, and American obstinacy will not be lessened by the Quai d'Orsay's description of the exclusion of the smaller cruisers as "the only solution" of the problem. Japan, whatever her own views, will give no strong support to any proposition to which Washington objects. Italy appears to be vaguely hostile. Nor is the only difficulty on the naval side. We do not yet know how far the British Government has accepted the French view on land disarmament. Here, the main split in the Assembly

seems to be on the question whether the annual contingent of recruits shall be limited only, as France and Italy desire, by the total man-power of the country, or fixed at a lower level. This is the real crux of the problem as regards the limitation of reservists, and we have yet to learn whether it has been included in the Anglo-French bargain. The indications are that it has.

* * *

The Labour Party has issued a brief Report on Currency, Banking, and Credit, in the form of a "supplement" to "Labour and the Nation," which sets out the general policy of the party. The argument of the Report is pitched in a quiet and reasonable key, and its recommendations, whether or not they are wisely conceived, are responsible and moderate. It expresses no opinion as to the wisdom of the post-war deflationary policy which culminated in the return to the gold standard, but it observes with justice:—

"Whatever view be taken of the merits of the post-war policy there are grounds for profound disquiet in the fact that during the years 1920 to 1925 the financial interests were able, almost without challenge, to force the nation up the long uphill road of deflation. Involving as it did, the most serious industrial and social consequences, it was clearly the most vital decision taken during those years. Yet it was the subject of astonishingly little political discussion. Indeed, until its consequences became painfully manifest, criticism of it was almost wholly confined to a few experts who foresaw what was going to happen. . . . What was lacking was an informed Parliamentary and public opinion, and the attitude of mind which regards such an issue as this as a matter of vital public concern."

As regards the future, the Report recognizes that "the true policy for this country is to do all in its power to implement the Genoa proposals," i.e., to seek through the co-operation of the central banks of different countries "the general maintenance of stable gold prices." This proposition will carry general support. Governor Norman himself will not dissent.

* * *

Controversy will be excited chiefly by the proposal that the Bank of England should be converted into a public Corporation, controlled by a body "containing representatives of such essential factors in the community as the Treasury, the Board of Trade, Industry, Labour, and the Co-operative movement." Regarded as the latest expression of the principle of "the nationalization of the banks," this proposal represents an immense advance towards practicability and good sense. No alteration in the *status* of the joint-stock banks (for none is suggested) and a public Corporation, detached from the ordinary mechanism of government, for the control of the Bank of England—there is nothing here which is fantastic, or chimerical, or objectionable in principle. The functions of a central bank are public functions, and it is undoubtedly anomalous that they should be entrusted, as they are now, to what is in form a private profit-making institution. Thus the proposal for a public Corporation offends no administrative principle; the question which it raises is merely one of method and expediency.

* * *

The Liberal "Yellow Book" proposed to retain the Bank of England "in essentials in its present form," but to make various changes in its constitution (e.g., fixing shareholders' dividends permanently at their present figure) in order to emphasize the public character of its responsibilities. But the "Yellow Book" urged the need for one change which, curiously, is entirely ignored in the Labour Report, namely, the abandonment of the traditional secrecy of the Bank. In addition to making suggestions for informative statistics,

&c., it laid down the principle that the Bank should, as the Federal Reserve Board does, "give general indications of its monetary and credit policy from time to time, of the objectives it is pursuing, and of the means by which it hopes to attain its ends." Such publicity represents, in our view, a reform which should properly precede any question of changing fundamentally the Bank's constitution. At present, as the Labour Report admits and emphasizes, public opinion is ignorant of monetary matters; and, so long as this ignorance is general, a Board composed of representatives of industry, labour, the co-operative societies, &c., would not be in a position to control the Bank's policy either wisely or effectively. Governor Norman's dictatorship might, indeed, prove more absolute under such an arrangement than it is at present. The first thing is to obtain such information as to the aims and working of our monetary policy as will make intelligent criticism possible. The Bank's constitution is better left as a matter for gradual evolution. If, however, the Bank authorities continue obstinately in their present path of declining to take the public into their confidence as to what they are doing or why they are doing it, some such change as the Labour Party propose may become inevitable. For the present secrecy will not prove tolerable much longer—a fact which the Bank authorities would do well to recognize.

* * *

The Conservative Party Conference is in full swing as we go to press, but the report of Mr. Baldwin's speech to the delegates on Thursday evening will reach us too late for comment in this issue. The speech will be eagerly scanned for its allusions to Safeguarding, which—whatever he may say—will constitute the chief plank in the election platform of most of his hearers. It is improbable, however, that Mr. Baldwin will make a very clear pronouncement on the Protectionist issue; that would be too dangerous. The measure of Protection to which he will be committed at the next General Election will ultimately be determined by a negative test—the extent of his pledges to refrain. The pledge not to protect foodstuffs will almost certainly be renewed, but what of raw materials?

* * *

The Indian Statutory Commission have left London for India, and the Viceroy has nominated Sir Sankaran Nair as the Chairman of the Central Committee which is to sit with them in the most important stage of their labours. Meanwhile, the All-Parties Conference, the European Association of India, the Anglo-Indian Community, the Chamber of Princes, and other bodies and interests are busy devising draft constitutions and constitutional memoranda representing all shades of opinion and all degrees of practicability. The violently conflicting views of these documents and the course of recent debates in the Assembly have alike shown the difficulty of the task with which the Commission are faced; nevertheless Sir John Simon was justified in couching his valedictory speech, at a luncheon given by the Aldwych Club, in a tone of reasoned optimism. The Commission have the backing of all parties in this country; they have the prospects of far more extensive and more cordial co-operation from all classes of the Indian community than at one time seemed likely; the more important memoranda placed before them, such as the report of the All-Parties Conference, show a moderation of tone and sense of responsibility new in Indian politics. It is clear at least that the magnitude of the task and the greatness of the opportunity are widely realized, both in India and in Great Britain, and are awaking the appropriate response.

The strike of Australian dockers has become extremely serious. The outstanding facts of the position are these. Although the strike has affected nearly all the great Australian ports since Judge Beeby gave his award on the dispute submitted to him, the attitude of the unions has been doubtful. The inter-State conference of maritime unions has categorically refused to support the strikers, and has put it on record that certain branches of the Waterside Workers' Federation are disobeying union orders. This is clear enough; but the attitude of the Waterside Workers' Federation is not so well defined; no report has yet stated clearly and unequivocally what is the position of the recognized authorities of that union. Some of its officials obviously reprobate the strike; that is all that can be said for the moment. No such uncertainties obscure the attitude of the Australian Government. Mr. Bruce has introduced a Bill for making the enrolment of free labour legal; licences are to be given to all who offer to work, and these licences are to be renewed when the strike is over. This Bill, which was introduced by a speech in a very combative style, has been passed and is now operative.

* * *

The Bill has been accompanied by a call for volunteers, and overseas ships are now being loaded by gangs composed of men from all classes of society. The sentiments of each side are familiar to us. Thousands of honest, decent-minded men believe, quite honestly, that the principles of constitutional government are in danger; thousands of equally decent workmen and artisans believe, equally honestly, that the machinery of government has been oppressively set in operation against them. The situation appears serious because the Government's Bill is a real throwing away of the scabbard; the provision for renewing the licences granted to temporary volunteers will rouse many a sober-minded union man from Perth to Brisbane. The continual hold-ups, official and non-official, in Australian ports, have undoubtedly become a real menace to the trade of the Commonwealth; the port workers have a bad record with regard to agreements, and the present strike is technically illegal; but when thousands of men combine to break the law, emergency legislation protective of a violated statute is not a good remedy. For the moment the council of maritime unions would appear to be the body which is best qualified to bring the strike to an end. Their task is not an easy one; for the prevailing feeling appears to be "fight to a finish": the strength of their position is that they have neither sanctioned the strike nor endorsed the Government's emergency Bill.

* * *

A dispute has broken out in the building industry at Manchester which, although at present confined to that district, contains within itself the seeds of a lock-out on a national scale which would involve fifteen thousand workers. The trouble has arisen because the Master Plasterers' Association is not affiliated to the Federation of Building Trades Employers, nor the workers' Union to the Federation of Building Trades Operatives, and in consequence neither employers' nor workers' organization is represented on, or amenable to the decisions of, the National Joint Council which regulates the rates of wages payable in the building industry. Members of the Master Plasterers' Association frequently pay higher rates than those which rule for building craftsmen other than plasterers, and, as a result of a successful strike in July, Manchester operative plasterers at present receive 1s. 9d. per hour compared with the usual building craftsmen's wage of 1s. 7½d. per hour. This settlement was not made by the

local organization of the building trades employers, but was agreed between the local association of master plasterers and the Manchester branch of the Plasterers' Union. Attempts to secure preferential wage rates in other districts, including Newcastle, Birmingham, and Plymouth did not meet with the same success, and the federated building trades employers are now attempting to introduce a measure of uniformity into the varying wage rates paid to plasterers. The Federation of Building Trades Employers denies that the Manchester dispute is at present more than a local trouble, but clearly the issue involved is of importance to the whole industry and may have repercussions on a national scale.

* * *

The Admiralty are to be congratulated on the reappointment of Captain Dewar to a sea-going command. Nothing which came to light in his court-martial suggested that he was anything but a highly competent officer; and his behaviour after he was dismissed his ship has throughout been correct and honourable. He took the first opportunity open to him of showing that he felt no rancour; after which he never uttered a word. An officer on half-pay, it should be remembered, cannot be prevented from writing or saying what he pleases. The Admiralty will be well advised if they place Captain Dewar on the list of those eligible for flag command when he is promoted to Rear-Admiral. His qualifications are unquestionable; and if he ever flies his flag an obliterative sponge will have been passed over the records of a most unfortunate affair.

* * *

The Italian Press states enthusiastically that the passing of the new law defining the constitution and powers of the Supreme Fascist Council is the most important event in Italian history since the march on Rome. If the assembling of a dignified and imposing committee is an important matter, the new law is important indeed. The Council, which is a sort of senate superimposed upon the Council of Ministers, is composed of well over twenty members; it fills Ministerial vacancies, and supervises the application of the Fascist philosophy of government from Sicily to the Great Saint Bernard. If the Council had been smaller, and if a special guard of armed roughs had been quartered in its offices, to give a Fascist emphasis to its decrees, then the present law might well be regarded as a preliminary to a new demonstration of Fascist energy. But the Council is large. Minister of State are *ex officio* members, and they will presumably form a compact inner clique which controls the remainder; and, if they are divided amongst themselves, they will divide the Supreme Council, which, as a consequence, will be unable to decide anything. The new law, in fact, has a highly theatrical character; and, indeed, seems dangerous to the Fascist Government, in that it introduces complication into machinery which should, above all things, be simple.

* * *

It is a matter for deep regret that Sarwat Pasha should have died whilst Anglo-Egyptian relations are still a subject of latent controversy. Sooner or later the complex questions covered by the reserved points of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement will come up for discussion and settlement. The death of a man who so nearly compounded a satisfactory settlement is a great misfortune. Sarwat failed to put Anglo-Egyptian relations on a more satisfactory footing, because the Wafd party was too strong for him. But there was a hope that its domination was temporary, and that Sarwat's increasing influence over the instructed bourgeoisie of Egypt would have turned the scales.

ANTAGONIZING AMERICA

THE Hearst newspapers in the United States have published a dispatch, dated August 3rd, from the French Foreign Office to French Ambassadors in various countries, in which the Franco-British naval compromise is explained and quoted. The authenticity and substantial accuracy of this document are admitted, both in London and in Paris, and the leakage of the terms of the compromise concluded nearly two months ago is now almost complete. We cannot admire the method which has been adopted of handling a matter in which an international public is deeply interested. In the first place, it was probably unwise for Sir Austen Chamberlain to announce that an agreement had been reached by Britain and France, before the other interested Powers had had an opportunity of commenting upon it. In the second place, having proclaimed its existence, and thus invited widespread speculation as to its character, it was extremely foolish to delay publication. Finally, when the substance of the document had appeared in the French Press and all sorts of sinister interpretations were being placed upon it, it was a piece of crass obstinacy to maintain official silence. The whole point of the agreement was that it should ultimately be submitted to the judgment of the world as the basis of a multilateral treaty for the limitation of naval armaments, and no good purpose could therefore have been served by an attempt at secrecy which has, in fact, resulted in the most damaging form of piecemeal revelation.

The nature of the Franco-British compromise is, however, a far more serious matter than the ineptitude with which it has been handled. The dispatch now published by the Hearst Press removes any possible doubt that the main proposals are for the limitation of surface ships of 10,000 tons or less with guns of calibre higher than six inches and up to eight inches, and submarines of more than 600 tons. Cruisers with guns of six inches or less and submarines of less than 600 tons would not be subject to limitation. This is admittedly a serious omission, since, as the French dispatch remarks, it "leaves the door open for a naval armaments race." Nevertheless, the agreement might have been of value if naval armaments were confined to Europe. Large cruisers with eight-inch guns are the most likely of all the craft now under construction to provoke fierce competition in building-programmes, if only because their powers have not yet been fully tested and are the subject of controversy. The long-radius submarine is essentially an offensive weapon. It would have been easy to understand, therefore, if America were non-existent, the advantage of an agreement along the above lines, limiting the most menacing naval categories and leaving those whose main functions are of a defensive character unrestricted.

Such a proposal would, on the one assumption we have mentioned, be well worth bringing before the Preparatory Commission as the next step in limitation. But what an amazing assumption it is that has to be made before this Franco-British project can be deemed

worthy of even a moment's consideration! Either America must be left out of account (in which case the discussion of naval limitation becomes utterly unreal), or it must be supposed that she will go back on the main contentions of her delegates at the Three-Powers Conference in Geneva last year, and entertain a proposal for the limitation of large cruisers, while the building of smaller cruisers remains unrestricted. All who followed the discussions at that Conference are familiar with the American contention that her lack of naval bases made 10,000-ton cruisers appropriate to her requirements, and that if we desired a number of smaller cruisers we must contrive to obtain them out of the total tonnage agreed upon for cruisers as a single category. It is equally clear that, whatever possibility there might have been at Geneva of shaking the American attitude on the question of the eight-inch gun, the opportunity has now passed. It is impossible to suppose that these considerations were not present in the minds of those who negotiated the so-called "compromise," or that they really expected the United States to welcome their proposals.

How then can we account for the "compromise" being put forward as a serious contribution towards the solution of the armaments problem? That is the psychological mystery by which we are confronted. We do not pretend that we can completely solve it. We recall, however, the many indications of a half-suppressed irritation with the United States that have emanated from members of the British Cabinet during the last few months; the frigid and hesitant spirit in which the Kellogg Pact was accepted; the eagerness with which it was interpreted to mean as little as possible; the ignorant jibe at America by which the Home Secretary chose to celebrate its signature. It was presumably in this mood that they entered into conversations with France to see whether a Franco-British agreement could not be reached on the issues which broke down our Geneva conference with the United States and Japan. Even so, it is highly improbable that our Ministers deliberately set out to affront America. They are not wicked, vindictive, or deeply scheming men. The discussion with France, as it was originally conceived, for the purpose of resolving the deadlock that had arisen between us in the Preparatory Commission was an entirely proper and necessary step. It is to be feared, however, that, in their mood of unreasonable irritation, our representatives were content to reach a compromise with France without allowing their minds to dwell upon its inevitable reception in the United States; and that when their attention was drawn (as it must have been) to this aspect of the matter, they shrugged their shoulders and said, "Well, we may as well show them that we can do a deal with France on this issue, and if Mr. Coolidge doesn't like our plan, let him propose a better." It is, we suggest, in some such mental processes as these that the most probable explanation of the British participation in the "compromise" will be found. And, incidentally, the stirrings of uneasy consciences would fully account for the

delay in publishing the unhappy document which was thus concocted.

Whether we have hit upon the true explanation of its origin or not, we are faced by the serious facts that this Franco-British "compromise" exists, that some at least of its provisions are known, that the United States Government is distinctly chilled by it, that the Big Navy Party in America is highly delighted with the finest propaganda weapon that has been presented to it since the War, and will use it for all it is worth to secure priority in Congress for the Cruiser Bill over that for the ratification of the Anti-War Pact. It would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the dangers of the situation which has been so wantonly created. America is being antagonized. The limitation of naval armaments, which is vital to the cause of world peace, has received a set-back from which it may prove extremely difficult to recover. The Washington Agreement, which must be reviewed in 1931, may have been imperilled. It is essential, therefore, in our judgment, that those who realize the importance of good relations with America should make their influence felt without delay. It is high time that we recognized the restraint of the United States in proposing parity of naval strength when she has it in her power to build a vastly greater fleet than we could possibly afford. It is not yet too late for public opinion to force our own Government to withdraw these ill-conceived proposals, unless indeed they are more deeply committed to the French than they are willing to admit. We are not without hope that the Cabinet will take alarm at the reception of their handiwork before irreparable damage has been done, but the lack of perspective they have hitherto shown is profoundly disquieting.

THE ELUSIVE MIDDLEMAN

THIS is the month when politicians who have to deal with country districts begin to furbish up a few speeches for use in the villages. On one point they will probably all agree. The agricultural middleman is cast for the rôle of villain. Sceptical villagers will be told about the hordes of wealthy speculators, each adding to the price but doing no work, who stand between the consumer and the producer. The solution, they will hear, lies in the blessed word co-operation, about which no further details are given, and, of course, in voting for Mr. Jorkins. Various figures of no particular accuracy or authority will be quoted as the "toll of the middleman," the favourite amount being £250,000,000, which will be justified by a vague reference to the Linlithgow Report. As the speaker wanders out of the half-lit schoolroom into the dark playground he may perhaps wonder why his audience displayed little enthusiasm at the prospect of sharing in this great wealth, and did not seem much impressed by his picture of the fur-coated parasite who battens upon their work.

Some years' experience of marketing several kinds of farm produce, and participating in a not too happy co-operative venture, have left the writer equally sceptical about any simple diagnosis of the farmer's discontents, and about the proposed cure. The weakness of the usual politician's argument is that he uses the word "middleman"

in two senses. Sometimes it is taken to include butchers, millers, maltsters, dairymen, and retailers, all of whom have votes, and none of whom like to be called parasites. When therefore the word is to be used opprobriously it is narrowed down to the relatively small set of people whose only function is to buy from the farmer, and sell again inside the trade. The number and importance of the latter in the home market, and the dependence of the farmer upon them are often grossly exaggerated. It is not difficult to discover the men who are doing this kind of business in any district. Most farmers would know their names and have a shrewd idea of their income. It is, of course, possible to find a few good specimens of the pure genus "middleman," the man who buys on the chance of a rise, who uses his superior business knowledge to drive a hard bargain, and who makes no pretence of performing any useful function like milling or keeping a retail shop. Such men are commonest in precarious industries like small-scale fruit and vegetable growing. They owe their position and influence to what is really a form of money-lending and insurance, but they are not a serious factor in the agricultural problem. Most of the other speculative dealers are quite lowly men whose chief function is to dispose of third or fourth grade produce and "job lots" which cannot be marketed through the usual channels. Even these, if they are in the cattle or pig trade, usually describe themselves as farmers or graziers, and rent some land and farm buildings near the market town. It would, in fact, be hard to draw the line between them and any farmer who hangs about the market on the chance of picking up cheap some poor grade cattle or pigs which he hopes to improve and sell again at a profit. In the corn exchange the outside dealers are mostly specialists, like seedsmen, who may speculate by buying doubtful samples of malting barley.

The farmer who has anything reputable to sell has no difficulty in disposing of it without the intervention of any middleman except the auctioneer, who is not a speculative middleman but an agent taking a fixed percentage. He sells his wheat to a miller, his milk to a dairy company or a factory. At the larger cattle markets the only serious bidders are local butchers and the agents of the butchers' rings in the more important towns. The latter are not speculators, but are usually paid some fixed salary. A farmer who is solvent need never use speculative middlemen except when he finds it convenient and profitable to do so. Some of them, like the "higgler," who collects such secondary produce as eggs and fowls from outlying farms, are performing a useful and not very remunerative job. It would be better if politicians could forget the word "middleman," for the real problem turns upon the profits which are made by men who are only partly middlemen, like millers, dairymen, butchers, greengrocers, and others who either retail farm produce or carry on some factory process. A considerable part of their profits are speculative, and the only opening for successful co-operation by farmers would be to replace these men, and not the few speculative middlemen whom he can always cut out if necessary, and who only handle a small proportion of his produce.

At present the prospects of such co-operative ventures are not very bright. Inland millers are far from prosperous, and the rapidity with which the smaller mills are being closed is becoming a serious inconvenience to arable farmers. Shortly after the war there were five active mills within easy carting distance from the writer's farm, but only one of these is still working. It would seem, then, that the miller's profits, even after allowing for what he gains as a middleman, are not such as to tempt farmers to supersede him. Bacon factories are in an equally pre-

carious condition, and it is possible that beet factories will go the same way when the subsidy is finally withdrawn. Farmers are equally wary about embarking upon the retailer's business. In most towns there are already too many shops, and any new co-operative venture meets with organized opposition from the established concerns, which are, of course, practically independent of the home-grown article, so that there is no question, outside the milk trade, of the farmers withholding supplies. The farmers' shop is also faced by a difficult dilemma. If it sells foreign meat, fruit, or vegetables, then it merely becomes another competitive business in a field which is often overcrowded. If, however, it only sells produce from its members there will be times of the year when it will have great difficulty in keeping its customers. There are better prospects in the dairy business, but in the South and West the distribution of milk is already controlled by a trust operating on a scale which could not be approached by an organization financed by farmers, and the general public will not look at any business proposition which is even remotely connected with farming in England.

The farmer knows that the distribution of food in England is managed wastefully and inefficiently. He is tired of people who come round and say that this is his fault, and that if he could only "cut out the middleman" all would be well. Do these good folk from the towns really imagine that our tenant-farmers, with their money tied up in depreciating stock and with overdrafts at the bank, are likely to capture England's immense retail food trade, or supersede the four combines which control the milling business at our ports? The crisis in the milk trade, a September interlude which is likely to occur each year, shows the strength of the farmer's case, and the weakness of his position. There is no secret about the cost of peddling milk. Many farmers have a small "dairy round" in villages and country towns, and few would deny that it is a very profitable side of their business, or that the cost of distribution is much less than the difference between retail and wholesale prices. Unfortunately there are a number of practical reasons why the successful retailing of milk in the cities and industrial centres must be undertaken on a large scale. Little dairies can and do exist, but only by making an unduly high percentage of profit. The large trust with ramifications over many counties can divert milk just where it is wanted, and take advantage of the five-day demand in office centres, and the holiday movement to the seaside. Against this no farmers' distribution agency, backed by their inadequate financial resources, is likely to compete successfully. They might run a co-operative venture competing against the other smaller dairies, but the only result would be to add another small and not very efficient business which could never hope to undercut the combine. The profits are there, and no attempt has ever been made to justify the percentage taken by the London retailers, but if anyone is to step in and control the business it must be the consumers or the Government, not the farmers. The latter are driven to the difficult expedient of mass bargaining, in which a scattered and very heterogeneous collection of men has to face a well organized and wealthier group. Even this method is only possible in the dairy business because milk cannot easily be imported.

Slowly but inevitably opinion in farming circles is veering round towards control, the control of imports, of retail profits, of milling policy, and of marketing. In the meantime, might politicians note that all farmers know what co-operation means, and that many of them have some time or other lost money over it?

G. T. GARRATT.

WAR-TIME POLITICAL OFFENDERS IN BELGIUM

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

LAST week the Belgian Chamber resounded with impassioned debates on a Bill for an amnesty to cover political offences committed during the war. The Bill had been proposed as long as two years ago by a private member, Mr. van Cauwelaert, burgomaster of Antwerp, leader of the Catholic Flamings. When at long last it was discussed by the Chamber in open session, it became clear that the Liberals (which in Belgium really means the Conservatives), who are known as *le parti de la France*, were still opposed to an amnesty, and that, although they are the smallest of the three principal parties, they still control the Government sufficiently to prevent its giving way on this point. It was said, and it seems to be the fact, that there is in the Chamber a majority in favour of an amnesty. Most of the Flemish members, both Catholics and Socialists, and even the very few Liberals who are returned by Flemish constituencies, would not dare oppose a measure which is so overwhelmingly supported by Flemish public opinion. Of the Walloon Socialists just enough would probably follow the dictates of Socialism rather than those of racial animosity to turn the scales. But Mr. van Cauwelaert is the prisoner of the Catholic Party, and rather than risking a division which would endanger the coalition and the fate of the Government, he allowed his own proposal to be referred once more to a committee, contenting himself with a promise that by November the Government would be ready with a policy of its own.

Very little is known in England about this question, which is rousing so much passion in Belgium. The political offenders for whom an amnesty is now desired by the large majority of the Flemish people are known as the Activists. While most of the Flamming politicians, Mr. van Cauwelaert amongst them, agreed during the war to let the Flemish grievances rest and to work loyally with the Government at Le Havre in the hope that when peace had been concluded this attitude would be rewarded by generous concessions, a number of those who had remained in occupied Belgium derided this "passivism" as naive or cowardly self-deception, and argued that the critical moment for Flanders had come, and that it was the duty of true Flamings to be "active" and snatch at the unique chance. For generations the movement had tried to achieve its objects by means of parliamentary action. Always the game of parties had eluded the wishes of the majority of the Belgian people, always the Governments at Brussels had been on the side of the Walloons and of the small but powerful clique of Frenchified Flemings, who together monopolized all financial and economic organization and all social prestige. Now that the Government had had to flee, it would be a deplorable lack of realism not to try and enlist the help of the invader. It was along this line of argument that a number of Flamings, mostly intellectuals and social workers, officials, teachers, and the like, were led to accept the assistance of the German administration of occupied Belgium to carry out a number of reforms for which the Flemish movement had long striven in vain. The French University of Ghent, for instance, hated by the Flemings as a centre of gallicization right in the Flemish country, was replaced by a Flemish University. Some of the Activists went further. A Council of Flanders was set up, and there was a group who wanted to break up Belgium and found an independent State of Flanders.

It is obvious that the Germans had their own aims in furthering these schemes, but it would be wrong to suspect

the sincerity of the Activists, at least of the majority of them. If they seriously believed that they would be powerful enough in the final account, if, as probably they expected, the war ended in a draw, to make the Germans pay for them instead of having to pay for the Germans, that would argue ill for their political judgment. But probably the clearest heads amongst them realized quite well that they were playing a desperate game, and all they hoped for was to rouse the national consciousness of the Flemish people, who, as they saw it, were lulled to sleep by their "passivist" leaders, the "Belgicist" Flammingants.

When the war ended as it did, at any rate, activism and all its works were swept away. In the excitement of victory a wave of Belgian patriotism swept over the country. Flemish public opinion gave way to it, but it soon recovered, and when it awoke to the realities of the situation it had to admit that the Activists had been right in their predictions. Immediately on his return the King had promised that "equality in law and in fact" would be secured to his Flemish subjects. But very little came of the "generous concessions" which Mr. van Cauwelaert and the other passivist leaders had hoped would be their "reward" after the war. The University of Ghent was refrenchified again, and only a partial substitution of Flemish has since been obtained under a scheme which is regarded as a mockery by all Flammingants.

It may be expedient to remind the reader that Flemish is not some backward rural dialect, unfit for purposes of higher education. It is but another name for Dutch. There is a growing sense of cultural homogeneousness between the Flemish and the Dutch peoples, and a situation in which the privilege of a university education in their own language is denied to the Flemings, while they see the respect in which Dutch universities are held all over the world, is really a curiosity.

In other respects, too, Flemish aspirations are still unfulfilled. A compromise in which Mr. van Cauwelaert has consented to a regulation of the language difficulty in the Army, the formation of Flemish companies instead of Flemish divisions, is causing at this very moment widespread disillusionment among his own followers. As a result Flemish opinion has changed considerably in its estimation of the Activists. A Flemish Nationalist Party was formed soon after the Armistice, and it has now six members in the Chamber and makes a strong appeal to the rising generation in Flanders.

Meanwhile, the trials of the Activists had been conducted in 1919 in the somewhat hysterical temper characteristic of those days. Most of those who had in any way meddled with activism had fled the country and are still living in exile in Holland. A considerable number, however, stood their trial. According to figures communicated last week by the Minister of Justice, 268 Flemings were sentenced on account of activism. (Hundreds who could not be prosecuted were thrown out of State or municipal employments; in Antwerp and other Flemish towns the latter category have since been largely reinstated.) Of these 268, 77 were sentenced to terms of imprisonment of less than twenty years, 31 of less than ten years, the other 158 to more than twenty years or to death; 168 of the 268 had fled and are in exile. Of the remaining 100, 87 served their sentences (most of which were considerably reduced), two are dead, ten are free on probation, and one is still in prison.

Of those who served their sentences one, Mr. Herman Vos, is now a representative of Antwerp in the Chamber and the most considerable member of the Flemish Nationalist Party. Of the exiles, many still are in touch with affairs in Flanders, and exert an influence which should not be

under-estimated. But the one man still in prison has become the great figure round which the amnesty movement centres. His name is Dr. August Borms; he is a schoolmaster by profession, and at present about fifty years old. During the war he belonged to the extreme wing of the Council of Flanders. It is generally admitted that his motives were pure. His death sentence was commuted to life-long imprisonment. Several years ago the Government offered him his release on condition that he promised not to take part in politics. This promise Borms has constantly refused to give, and it is this refusal which for thousands of Flemings, and especially for the ardently Catholic students and younger people generally, has transformed him into the venerated figure of the Martyr, the Martyr for Flanders.

In vain have Mr. van Cauwelaert and Mr. Huysmans, the Catholic Flammingant and the Socialist Flammingant, tried to make the Walloons and Fransquillons (that is, the denationalized Flemings) understand that by their vindictiveness they were adding fuel to the flame of anti-Belgian feeling. In vain have they argued that Borms in prison is bound to be a far more dangerous person than Borms out of prison. A widely signed international address to the Belgian Chamber (it carried the signatures of some twenty English people prominent in public life), which, while disclaiming any intention of pronouncing on the merits or demerits of activism, intimated that European opinion failed to understand this refusal to be generous, also remained without effect. It is difficult for an outsider to realize the bitterness engendered by the racial struggle in Belgium. The Walloon-cum-Fransquillon ascendancy, who feel themselves threatened by the rising tide of Flemish democracy, are seeking shelter in an excitable patriotism, for which the most moderate Flammingantism is equivalent to treason.

As Mr. van Cauwelaert shrinks from using his parliamentary opportunities to the full, for fear of the consequences to the Liberal-Catholic coalition, it is unlikely that the Government will come round to the amnesty plan. It is, however, expected that they will release Borms before the parliamentary debate is resumed in November, and a measure of mercy, which will not relieve them of civil disabilities, may enable most of the exiles to return ere long. The way in which the whole affair is handled, however, will do nothing to bring about a reconciliation between the nationalities in Belgium, nor will it add to Mr. van Cauwelaert's prestige. Flemish nationalism will remain a force to be reckoned with in Belgian politics.

LIFE AND POLITICS

NOW that Mr. Baldwin and Mr. MacDonald are back from their holidays—both, according to the favourite formula of some reporters, looking bronzed and well—politics will break out with the usual autumn severity. Mr. Baldwin, certainly, will need all his evasive cheeriness of disposition in the days ahead of him. Both home and foreign politics are, as the small boy said of the Channel in a rough crossing, "in a mess." Mr. Baldwin, it is true, specializes in the casting of oil on troubled waters, and in the pleased contemplation of a subsequent calm that only exists in his perorations. As Mr. Lloyd George has been saying, with complete truth, Mr. Baldwin is everything that is amiable, but, unfortunately, he has no drive. He does not really pretend to have any, but his modesty is no adequate compensation for the lack of the first requisite in a Prime Minister. He drifts from crisis to crisis, trusting to his general popularity—his party's greatest asset—to get him across the channel safe and smil-

ing. Even Mr. Baldwin cannot live on the Bonar Law legacy of tranquillity for ever, and on all hands, among people who care nothing for the party game and very much for the credit and welfare of the nation, there is uneasiness over the eternal postponement and make-believe of the Government leaders. Another winter is upon us, and still the mass of unemployment stagnates, and still there is no sign whatever at the heart of the administration of any vigorous impulse, any bold effort to set about the scientific reorganization of our resources. Tory apologists appeal to us to trust the man at the helm—the man of “plain good intention” (Burke). Yes, but is Mr. Baldwin at the helm? Or is he merely hanging over the side of the ship, busy with his oil can soothing the storm within the Tory Party?

I do not know what he is going to say at Yarmouth, but I can believe the intelligent forecasts to the effect that he will escape the trouble of defending a bad case in some mild abuse of his opponents. The Protectionist revolt against the Churchillian rating scheme as the chief election plank is genuine enough, but Mr. Baldwin will ignore it as long as he can, and if he cannot, will make out that it is of no consequence. The Protectionists mean business, and they will succeed, if I am not mistaken, in taking Mr. Baldwin to the country on the issue they desire. In a real sense Sir H. Page Croft is the leader of the Tory Party. He says what every Tory thinks—that rating “reform” is a cock that will not fight at the general election. They have forced Mr. Baldwin, while he still ingeminates his renowned pledge, to the point of throwing open the door to the safeguarding of iron and steel, and that is really all they need to do. The Page Crofts indulge in tortures of dialectical ingenuity to prove that safeguarding is not Protection, while they betray in every sentence their knowledge that it is a case of the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The Protectionists have got the substance, and know that the oratorical frills do not matter very much. The Tory Party is, as it has ever been, the Protectionist Party, and under whatever elegant disguise, will go to the country as such. Mr. Baldwin's lack of “drive” is partly temperamental, but chiefly due to the fact that in his heart he agrees with Sir H. Page Croft, but does not think it safe to act upon his convictions.

The misfortune of Parliamentary holidays is that they make it so much easier for headstrong departments to get the country into trouble. When the House of Commons is sitting there is at any rate always the hope that things can be made sufficiently unpleasant for wilful Ministers to scare them from making gross blunders. The Foreign Office has used its freedom these last weeks to some purpose. There was the inconceivably stupid permission given to our cavalry to manœuvre with the French in Germany, at one end of the series of mistakes, and now the world is vocal with the needless row caused by the refusal to publish the naval agreement. Anyone could have foreseen what would happen. The Anglophobe-American newspapers have published the truth in the manner most calculated to do mischief to our relations with the United States, and to give an appearance of duplicity and cunning to the whole proceeding. The whole Liberal Press warned the Foreign Office weeks ago, but Lord Cushendun, who, for our sins, has charge of British foreign policy, was—Lord Cushendun. The disclosure in America confirms the worst that was feared of the arrangement with the French, and I find on all sides a sort of dismay at the mess that has been made. Here is proof once more of the extraordinary detachment from—or cynical indifference to—what the mass of our

people want in the direction of foreign relations which marks the behaviour of our masters in Whitehall.

We were all, I think, startled by the pitiful revelations made by Lord Ronaldshay in his last volume of the tragedy of Curzon's last years. It was, of course, well known that he regarded himself as the rightful successor of Bonar Law; but no one knew the story of that cruel summons to see the King's secretary, or the intense bitterness of the disappointment. It is also somewhat startling to be made to realize that the power of the King to choose one man rather than another as Prime Minister was in full employment. The King chose Mr. Baldwin, for reasons which may or may not have been sound; the point of interest is that the choice was made, and it was decisive. Lord Curzon was passed over, with every circumstance of humiliation. I think myself that in the event the choice made was the best, indeed, the inevitable one. One may fully sympathize with Lord Curzon in the terrible blow to his ambition and pride, but, really, he would not have done as Prime Minister at all. The country would not have stood for him, as Americans say. It was not merely that he was already a failing man, the ghost indeed of the powerful Curzon of Viceregal days, but he was unpopular, and to have placed the supreme power in his hands would have caused general uneasiness. Owing to some strange twist in his make-up, it was always impossible for him to get into living touch with the people; they never knew or cared for him. He was indeed an extraordinary mixture of greatness and littleness. The same man who could survey high problems with magnificent sweep and elevation, could delight in the details of some insignificant affair with all the fussy anxiety of a chronicler of small beer.

All the obituary notices of the Earl of Durham in the newspapers, so far as I know, treated him as though his sole claim to distinction was as a sportsman. Lord Durham, however, owned other things than racehorses—he owned coal, for instance. A more accurate estimate of Lord Durham's importance in the national economy may be obtained from a glance at the evidence which he gave before the Sankey Coal Commission. It was then disclosed that Lord Durham owned the coal under 12,411 acres of land in the county of Durham, and that in the year 1918 his income from royalties was £35,620. I have a vivid memory of hearing Lord Durham stating these facts to the Commission and afterwards sustaining, with great self-possession and readiness, a devastating cross-examination from Mr. Smillie and Mr. Herbert Smith, in which they insisted on forcing him to face the social implications of the private ownership of coal.

There is a pathetic side to the quarrel now raging between the City Fathers and the Ministry of Transport. One can sympathize with the Lord Mayor, who is compelled to look out of the windows of the Mansion House and watch the traffic going all one way by edict of the Ministry, while he and the whole Corporation want it to go all ways at once, as in the good old days. It is sad evidence of the decay of the former power and glory of the Lord Mayor and his fellows that they must bow to the dictates of the bureaucrats in Whitehall even in the matter of the regulation of the traffic in the sacred City itself. As a witty Councillor remarked, “We have sold our birthright, not for a mess of pottage, but for a mess of traffic.” The City calls on the Minister to take his nasty roundabout away, and calls in vain, and the bitter cry of the shopkeepers goes up to heaven. There are people outside the

City—according to report, Mr. Churchill is one of them—who see no particular use in the Transport Ministry, except to afflict England with desolately hideous roads and to destroy beautiful old bridges. Those people are watching the duel between the City and the Minister with interest, and with heartfelt prayers for the victory of the Lord Mayor, who thinks, as many others do, that the roundabouts are a device to make the lives of pedestrians slightly more precarious than before.

This is an enviable find that Dr. Caroline Spurgeon has made in America of Keats's copy of Dr. Johnson's edition of Shakespeare, with his annotations. There is something delightfully characteristic of the marvellous boy in the fierce arrogance roused in him by the pompous pedantry of Johnson. One is reminded of the anecdote of Gray who, seeing Johnson roll by in the street, remarked to a friend that he would like to dust his jacket till his pension jingled in his pockets. With what amusing vivacity does Keats turn the weapon of Shakespeare against the despotic arbiter of late eighteenth-century taste, likening him to "the clamorous owl that hoots at our quaint spirits." Shakespeare, as we know from a letter written at this time, was to Keats "the good genius." It was intolerable to him that Johnson should be allowed to subject the "Midsummer Night's Dream" to a heavy summing-up. All the rapture of the new ecstasy in poetry flames out in the boyish anger of these marginal scrawlings. Later on he was to condense the revolt of the new poetry from the eighteenth century in the line in which he abuses the "puny race" of Augustans

"That blasphem'd the bright Lyrist to his face."

KAPPA.

DISARMAMENT

A VARIATION ON AN OLD THEME

SIR AUSTEN, with his sword alarming,
Stood waiting for his friends' disarming;
His friends, new packt for peace, stood lost in
Mute expectation of Sir Austen.

G. K. A. BELL.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ANATOLE FRANCE AND BROUSSON

SIR,—I know that Mr. Francis Birrell did not intend to misrepresent me, but he should really be more careful. When and where have I—or, for that matter, any friend of Anatole France—said, or even suggested, that M. Brousson is "merely a disgruntled, illiterate lackey, whose work is a tissue of stupid lies"? I agree with everything that Mr. Birrell says about M. Brousson's literary ability, and I am not sure that it would be too much to say that he is a "very considerable creative artist," for there is at least as much Brousson as France in his books. His books contain much that is true and more half-truths than lies. Indeed, I doubt whether any saying that he puts into Anatole France's mouth is a pure invention. There is, usually at any rate, a nucleus of truth most artistically worked up. "Stupid" is the very last epithet that I should apply to M. Brousson. Mr. Birrell has perhaps missed the point of my quotation about domestic service. M. Brousson has often been compared to a discharged valet, and what the author of the sentence quoted meant was that the comparison was unjust to valets.

If Mr. Birrell will look again at my letter, he will find that I did not suggest that M. Brousson made money while he was with Anatole France. Here again there is no difference between me and Mr. Birrell. The account of the conversation at Lapérouse Restaurant that forms the preface

to "Anatole France en Pantoufles," shows that M. Brousson saw in France profitable "hypothetical copy" and that France himself knew it, for he said: "Quand je serai gisant sous la dalle, faites-moi dire tout ce que vous voudrez." I am convinced that this is authentic, for it is characteristic of Anatole France, who always knew when he was being exploited and usually allowed the exploitation to continue. But in M. Brousson's place I do not think I should have quoted that suggestive "faites-moi dire."

M. Brousson can hardly have found France "a stimulating and amusing companion," seeing that he declares his conversation to have been boring—although his own samples of it hardly support that view—and asserts that he had a very limited brain and knew and cared about nothing but history. M. Brousson was a far-seeing and business-like young man, who rightly thought it a good speculation to stay with Anatole France at a low salary and acquire proficiency in imitating his style. It is even a possible hypothesis that he also stayed at the Villa Saïd in a representative capacity, for, so far as M. Brousson has any convictions, he is clericalist and reactionary. One of the excuses that France always made for him—he made excuses for everybody—was that he had had an ecclesiastical training.

The reasons of M. Brousson's hatred of Anatole France are obscure, but although, so far as I can remember, I have never met M. Brousson, I believe him to be malevolent by nature, for I know that he set himself consistently to make mischief between Anatole France and Mme. Arman de Caillavet. Even worse than his treatment of France is his treatment of that remarkable woman, to whom France owed a debt of gratitude that he acknowledged to the day of his death. "Madame," as she appears in M. Brousson's books, is a libellous caricature. A fact that throws light on M. Brousson's loyalty is that, after his return from Argentina in 1909, he had an interview with Mme. Arman at her request, in the course of which he professed his sincere attachment to her, declared his complete agreement with her attitude, and admitted that she had reason to complain of his conduct. For two years before the visit to Argentina Mme. Arman had refused to have M. Brousson in her house.

The question is not whether a great writer must necessarily be a "nice man"—a designation that hardly fits Anatole France—but whether the word of one man, and that man a bitter enemy, is to be taken against the testimony of all France's friends, some of whom had known him all their lives, and even of France's own works. The truth about great writers, as M. Pierre Mille has said, is to be found in their works, in which one hears the writers themselves after they have reflected, whereas an author of reminiscences, however conscientious, involuntarily puts something of himself into the relation. What if he be not conscientious, but a man with an axe to grind? Tolstoi warned his family not to attach importance after his death to what he might have said in casual conversation, for he had often talked at random. Who does not? Most of us sometimes say things in private conversation with friends that we should be sorry to have repeated on the house-tops as evidence of our settled convictions. If the methods of M. Brousson are to become general, all freedom in social intercourse will become as impossible as it is in a country where one is surrounded by police spies.

Nothing could be easier than to make, with a certain end in view, a one-sided and biased selection of perfectly authentic remarks made by a man in private conversation—especially a very intelligent and witty man—that would give quite a false impression of his character and opinions. It was particularly easy in the case of Anatole France, who contradicted himself in his talk even more than in his books. What he said of Montaigne—"multiple, divers et fécond en contradictions"—was true of himself. Besides, he entirely lacked reserve and hypocrisy, and unbosomed himself more completely than anybody else I have ever met. He said things that other people may think, but never say. He was perfectly frank about his own weaknesses and shortcomings and more inclined to impute bad motives to himself than good ones. He often told stories about or even against himself that were pure inventions—M. Brousson has published several of them. He was very often ironical and, naturally, not always serious. Some people—M. Brousson can hardly

have been among them—never succeeded in detecting his irony or in knowing whether he was serious or not. I could give some amusing examples of such misapprehensions.

It is, therefore, not necessary to my purpose to dissect M. Brousson's books with the object of separating the grain of France from the chaff of Brousson. Supposing that every conversation reported by M. Brousson were verbally accurate, his books would still be a misrepresentation of Anatole France, and the fact that he makes France a character "entirely consistent within" itself is a proof of it, for a true picture of France would not present such a character. Everybody that knew Anatole France was at once struck, on reading "*Anatole France en Pantoufles*," by the almost entire omission from it of any allusion to many of the subjects that interested him most and about which he talked most. It gives no idea of the extraordinary range and variety of his talk. The amount of space given to amorous adventures suggests that they occupied the greater part of France's time and thought, whereas they occupied only a very small part. Of course, France had a *polisson* side to his character, but he had so many others.

The best proof that M. Brousson has misrepresented Anatole France is that he has given Mr. Birrell the idea that he was nothing but a "droll" and a "humour." Fundamentally, Anatole France was a melancholy man. His almost terrifying perspicacity made him so—he had no illusions, and if anybody ever saw things as they are, he did. Besides, although he was in a sense a man of the market place—never in the least the "cloistered scholar" of legend—he was self-centred and, to a certain extent, isolated. I do not think that any human being was ever absolutely necessary to him. Family ties did not hold him strongly and his social affection was more profound than his individual affection, although it is untrue that he was not affectionate towards individuals. But he seemed to fear a very great affection for himself, because of its inevitable tyranny. He had a horror of the French Family and the tyrannical affection of French parents for their children. Of the innumerable people that have written about Anatole France since his death the only one, so far as my knowledge goes—I have not read all the books about him—that has grasped this, the most essential, side of his character, is M. de Ségur, whose little book, "*La Mélancholie du Génie*," gives the truest picture of France that has been published. I do not doubt that, as your reviewer suggested, M. Brousson is superficial as well as malignant and never really understood France, but I should have thought that France's melancholy is discernible in his works.

In any case, a more or less accurate report of the lightest word that a writer has spoken really cannot be held to invalidate his mature and considered judgments. For instance, I know that France had a great and sincere admiration for Renan, and the passage about Renan quoted by your reviewer is clearly a small piece of France served up with copious trimmings à la Brousson. Had I not already taken far too much of your space, I should have liked to examine this and some other typical Brousson passages, for example, that in which he makes France say that he went into politics from interested motives, which may be authentic, but if so is certainly not serious, as some extravagantly absurd remarks in it show.

A truer idea of Anatole France, by the way, than M. Brousson gives is given by M. Le Goff in "*Anatole France à La Bécherie*." M. Le Goff is often inaccurate about facts and dates, he has a bee in his bonnet—that France was a Royalist—and he never understood France, so that his judgments and interpretations are absurd. As M. Brousson libels Mme. Arman de Caillavet, so M. Le Goff libels Mme. France for no discoverable reason, for, to my knowledge, she invariably showed him great kindness and even exerted herself to try to get him the Legion of Honour, which for some strange reason he coveted. This passion for vilifying the two women whose disinterested devotion played an important part in Anatole France's life is, I should suppose, the result of some complex. Nevertheless, with all M. Le Goff's shortcomings and faults of taste, he lets France speak for himself and is, on the whole, a faithful reporter, whose reports are only occasionally coloured by his bias. Just because he has not M. Brousson's literary ability—or, indeed,

any at all—he is incapable of imitating France's style and putting his own words into France's mouth. I happen to have heard a great many of the conversations that he reports, and, as the reports of those that I heard are substantially accurate (although, of course, often curtailed), I conclude that the others probably are.—Yours, &c.,

ROBERT DELL.

September 22nd, 1928.

THE SAFEGUARDING OF STEEL

SIR,—I have read with much interest and sympathy the article in your issue of August 25th, entitled "How Does Free Trade Stand?" It is a pleasure to find *THE NATION* admitting that the proposition that imports are paid for by exports must be received with caution, and that it is quite erroneous to suppose that a curtailment of commodity imports necessarily involves a corresponding curtailment of commodity exports. This is a first step towards a better understanding of the position of the advocates of safeguarding.

But when you come to deal with the iron and steel trades you make, it seems to me, the mistake of assuming that a safeguarding duty would involve an increase in British steel prices, or at any rate the maintenance of existing prices and the exclusion of cheaper foreign steel. If either of these results were inevitable, then undoubtedly the advocates of safeguarding would be the lunatics Mr. Snowden thinks they are, and all the repercussions on subsidiary trades which you dread would follow. But relying on the experience gained in the safeguarded trades, *e.g.*, the motor trade, and on the unanimous opinion expressed by the chairmen of all our principal iron and steel companies, the Safeguarder holds that with the increasing production which would follow the imposition of a duty, British prices would fall, and go on falling, and that, so great is the margin between the foreigner's costs and the price he now sells at, that he would inevitably have to follow the British prices down as he now follows them up. So that in the end the subsidiary trades would get their iron and steel cheaper whether they bought from the foreigner or the home producer. This is exactly what has happened in the motor trade. Motor-cars, both British and foreign, are cheaper now than before the duty was imposed. The same argument applies to our other basic industries, *e.g.*, the cotton and woollen trades. Moreover, lower prices would mean larger exports, and increased production will obviously benefit both the coal trade and the railways.

But, says the Free Trader, how can these things be? You, sir, have given the answer in a later article in which you have wisely remarked that respectable orthodoxies are very untrustworthy guides whenever we are faced with new conditions and abnormal difficulties; and where, I think, the Free Trader goes wrong is in failing to recognize that for British manufacturers present conditions are in the highest degree abnormal. They are faced with the appalling burdens of the highest rates and taxes in the world; a high standard of living for the workers; Trade-Union restrictions; depreciated Continental exchanges; a huge surplus production in America, and last, but not least, deflation and the return to the Gold Standard. With these handicaps chairman after chairman of our manufacturing companies has stated that it is impossible to produce at a profit under a system of free imports. Consequently all our basic industries are working short time, and our prices are scarcity prices. Rationalization is a mere palliative, and even Mr. Churchill's derating scheme is admitted by its author to be insufficient to restore prosperity. The only way in present circumstances to place our manufacturers on an equality with the foreigner is to impose an import duty, and if it is fixed with care the results are likely to be as above described. It is important to recollect that although foreign costs of production are far below ours, the British consumer does not benefit by the whole of the difference. The foreign producer, the wholesale importer, and the retailer are not altruists, and in varying proportions they share between them the large profits represented by the difference between the foreign cost of production and the price at which the foreign article is sold, which naturally they fix as near the English price as they dare.

Reduce the English price by ensuring larger production and the foreign price must follow. Such is the Safeguarder's creed, as I understand it; and it would be interesting to know whether THE NATION can detect any flaw in it.

I am afraid I do not attach the same importance as you do to the argument that recourse by Great Britain to some extension of Protection would kill the Economic Conference at Geneva. Cobden thought that if England declared for Free Trade all the world would follow suit, but was disappointed, and English Governments are only too apt to make concessions in the hope—usually vain—of getting some return. Foreigners are greater realists than we are. Is it really likely that America or France or Belgium or Germany will show much desire to reduce their tariffs while they can pour their surplus production free into England? I should say not. I am inclined to think that the surest way to get some agreement in the Conference is to make it clear that England means to keep her home market mainly for her own people. Then we can all talk at the Conference on equal terms.—Yours, &c.,

HUGH BARNES.

19, Sheffield Terrace, Kensington, W.8.
September 12th, 1928.

[We set out at some length in the article to which Sir Hugh Barnes refers the reasons why in our view import duties on steel must raise the price to the consuming industries. It is perhaps sufficient here to observe that the advocates of Safeguarding in the steel industry itself rest their case on the contention that it is impossible for British steel works, even with the most modern plant, running full time, to produce steel at as low a price as Continental producers, aided by low wages, transport subsidies, &c., can supply it.—Ed., NATION.]

SIR,—Since Dr. Earp finds the theoretical grounds against safeguarding inconclusive, perhaps the following facts, taken from an article in the ECONOMIST of July 28th may help him.

The average monthly imports of iron and steel and pig iron were as follows:—

Year.	Iron and Steel.		Pig iron.	
		Tons.		Tons.
1913	...	186,000	...	15,400
1926	...	312,000
1927	January-June	428,000	...	66,000
	July-December	306,000	...	30,000
	January	555,000	...	96,000
	December	280,000	...	17,000
1928	January	284,000	...	16,000
	June	210,000	...	6,000
	January-June	257,000	...	11,000

Thus imports of iron and steel have fallen continuously from the beginning of 1927 till in last June they were under half those of 1927 and only 24,000 tons above the monthly average of 1913. In pig-iron the decline is much greater, the average for January to June, 1928, being about one-sixth of that of January to June, 1927. According to the ECONOMIST's correspondent, this drop is partly due to the fact that imports in 1926 and early 1927 were inflated owing to the coal strike, but to a large extent to a rise in prices on the Continent. Here, then, we have a test as to the soundness of safeguarding. If the safeguarders are right in their assumption that diminished imports would increase home production we should expect the figures of the home trade to have increased from the beginning of 1927 onwards. The actual figures are as follows:—

	Pig iron		Iron and Steel	
	Imports	Home Production	Imports	Home Production
1927.	1,000 tons.	1,000 tons.	1,000 tons.	1,000 tons.
January-June	398.1	3,728.9	2,570.2	4,989.1
July-December	181.1	3,564.7	1,835.9	4,109.2
1928.				
January-June	67.4	3,422.2	1,542.3	4,290.2

thus pig iron production has fallen by 300,000 tons and steel by 700,000 tons during this period. The home consumption of coal has fallen by roughly 200,000 tons during this period.

Thus none of the benefits which Dr. Earp expects from a reduction of imports have actually occurred.

Fifty per cent. of the home production is exported, while a large part of the remainder is ultimately exported in the form of manufactured articles.

Prices cannot be raised in either of these sections, and

therefore, if iron and steel producers cannot produce profitably at present prices, under safeguarding home consumers will have to pay prices sufficient to cover the losses on exports. In other words, under 40 per cent. of the consumers will have to pay prices sufficient to cover losses on the over 60 per cent. which is exported (either directly or in the form of manufactured articles). Thus a reduction of production consequent on increased prices is to be expected on theoretical grounds, and is borne out by the facts.

For further details I must refer Dr. Earp to the original article.—Yours, &c.,

F. W. BACON.

Bayfield, 110, Old Park Ridings, N.21.
September 17th, 1928.

THE PROGRESSIVE VOTE

SIR,—The second paragraph of Kappa's article "Life and Politics" in to-day's NATION stresses the wisdom of an understanding being arrived at immediately between the leaders of the Liberal and Labour Parties for a working agreement in the not unlikely event of the two parties holding a majority of seats in the next Parliament. Most members of sane opinion in both parties probably desire this achievement as much as does Kappa himself, but have little faith in its accomplishment.

Would it not, however, be quite within the bounds of possibility if an attempt was made to secure an agreement between the parties for the single purpose of reforming the electoral laws by the introduction of, say, the second ballot (or alternative vote) with the understanding that when this is achieved the then Prime Minister should advise the dissolution of Parliament? The two progressive parties could then, if they wished, resume their present hostility relieved from the fear that their disagreements would hand the affairs of the country to a reactionary minority Government for probably a dangerously lengthy period.

In order to achieve this, to my mind, desirable purpose, a joint committee of leaders of the two parties should meet and weigh the possibilities in each individual constituency. Recent numerical records of the achievements of candidates in such constituencies to be the deciding factor. They should then advise the withdrawal of such candidates (for the one election only) whose chances are, on such evidence, the weakest. In the few instances where the question is an open one both candidates should be permitted to go forward to the election, unless such candidates and their local organizations could arrive at an amicable understanding.

It is fairly evident from the figures of some recent by-elections that a large number of the rank and file of the two parties are already following this line of action by refusing to vote for their own party candidate where such candidate has, in their opinion, no chance of being successful in a three-corner fight.—Yours, &c.,

W. F. CORNISH.

Forest Hill, S.E.
September 22nd, 1928.

SIR,—I should like to dot the i's and cross the t's of the assertion, made both by Mr. Snowden in the PALL MALL GAZETTE and by "Kappa" in your current issue, that there is sufficient common ground between the Liberal and Labour Parties to keep a progressive Government going for five years. Last year, at Bewdley, I put forward a policy which had the approval of both headquarters. Nevertheless, such is human nature and the state of politics, I got precious little encouragement from either, for the very reason that I had satisfied the other. Now it appears that reason is beginning to prevail on high. Why not begin by arranging that where the candidate with the prior claim is willing to adopt this policy, which is one of national organization of production, no opposition shall be offered by the other Progressive party?

The party-men say: "Wait till after the election." With our roulette system of non-representation, that may be too late. The Tory majority may by mere chance be snatched as a brand from the burning, though it is bound to suffer terribly. Our present discontents are due solely to the disruption of the Progressive forces. The unemployed

are dying daily of starvation and despair. Upon those who oppose Liberal-Labour co-operation is their blood.—I am, Yours, &c.,

CHARLES KING.

Bath School, Grosvenor, Bath.
September 22nd, 1928.

RAIDS BY BLACKS IN AUSTRALIA

SIR,—The reports in the TIMES of the 5th, 8th, and 11th, entitled "Raids by Blacks in Australia," and, "Lawless Australian Blacks," are serious indeed. Serious too is the comment: "The reference in the police reports . . . that it was necessary to resort to drastic measures is taken to mean that most of the blacks were shot at sight, which usually happens nine times out of ten in similar circumstances." The TIMES also quotes Dr. Basedow: "A leading anthropologist, who is familiar with the tribes and the area involved in the disturbances, says that hostility of the blacks towards the whites has been pronounced since settlers went there, because the blacks considered this an invasion of their tribal country." The cause of the trouble is indicated: "The blacks would reason that they are justified in killing the cattle of whites because the whites have taken their game;"—and the cause points the cure, *restoration to the aborigines of a portion of their country with permanent water on it and large enough for them to make a living on it for themselves and their families.* This is urged by the Aborigines Protection League, of which Dr. Basedow is Chairman.

Meanwhile, in default of the natural game of the country, "at Coniston Station, where the blacks are reported to be concentrating, hundreds of goats have been killed, and they are now spearing cattle." (TIMES, September 8th.) Furthermore, "according to the latest advices seventeen (aboriginals) have been shot dead." (TIMES, September 11th.) One must take care not to be unfair to settlers who have difficulty in making a livelihood under trying conditions. The initial error is that Governments omit to provide for the native inhabitants when surveying their lands and computing rents for revenue, for, in the words of the Acting Administrator of the Northern Territory, in his annual Report for the year ended 1920 (p. 19)—"The natives of Australia have never been recognized as having any legal title to their tribal lands. The whole of the lands of Australia were constituted Crown Lands and under various Land Acts have been sold or leased by the Government to white settlers."

The question of centralizing or "nationalizing" legislation dealing with the aborigines does not arise in this case—there is no question of friction or complications with States; the matter is already "national" in that the Federal Government is alone responsible for conditions in Central Australia. And it has the means for remedying the heartrending and disgraceful situation.

One recognizes with gratitude the growing public opinion in Australia, but unless measures are taken at once it will be too late; may I hope that you will support the public-spirited Australian men and women who are trying to obtain possible conditions for the unhappy native race, and emphasize the importance of tackling the whole problem in the interest of humanity and justice, and terminating conditions which lead to such appalling results as that "blacks are shot at sight." I enclose my card.—Yours, &c.,

BRITISH-AUSTRALIAN.

Overseas Club, S.W.
September 17th, 1928.

THE GOLD STANDARD

SIR,—It is to be hoped that the Liberal Party will not be induced by any calling of electioneering names such as "sound" and "soft" to subscribe to the theory to which Mr. Mason adheres so tenaciously.

The assumption of the title of "Sound Currency" by the Bullionists, those modern representatives of Midas who think that we want to convert everything we touch into their favourite metal, and who are quite prepared to sacrifice all other interests in the country to the price of bullion and the shibboleth of sterling exchange, is nothing but the most impudent effrontery.

This so-called Standard, which originated (according to Mr. R. G. Hawtrey) in nothing more permanent than a temporary overvaluation of gold in terms of silver after the Napoleonic wars, has produced the following movements in general prices.

i. The shortage of gold in comparison with silver, combined with the suppression of £1 notes, aggravated the decline of the war prices, which fell from an index of 150 in 1818 to 74 in 1849.

ii. Fortunately the discoveries of gold in Australia and California then increased the output from £8 to £30 million a year, and Sauerbeck's index rose from 74 in 1849 to 111 in 1873.

iii. But in 1873 Germany adopted gold as a standard after buying £50 million in two years. The period of prosperity came to an abrupt close, and in twenty years prices again fell nearly 50 per cent.

iv. Between 1890 and 1898, however, the discoveries on the Rand and the invention of the cyanide process increased the output of gold from £25 to £65 millions, and prices rose from 61 in 1896 to 85 in 1913.

v. Since 1925 prices have fallen about 15 per cent., and so long as the Bank is allowed to pursue its present policy there is not much chance of any recovery. The Bank and the Treasury are apparently determined to hoard gold and to regard the money market as more important than industry, and the Bank Act is designed to their purpose. If gold comes in, the Bank can sterilize it by selling securities on the ground that conditions are not right for expansion; and when it goes out, the Bank can allow the "automatic" process of the "standard" to function, and bring about a reduction of credit with falling prices.

Considering its record, and the manner in which it can be "worked" under the present and future Acts, to refer to the Gold Standard system as one that provides a "sound" currency is either deliberately misleading or shows gross ignorance.—Yours, &c.,

GEOFFREY BIDDULPH.

Liscard, Shortlands.
September 16th, 1928.

THE ANTI-BABELISTS SPANISH VERSUS ESPERANTO

SIR,—As it seems impossible to get a sufficient number of people to learn an artificial language, and as the Anti-Babelists have already produced half a dozen new languages, would it not be better to adopt a living language for international purposes?

The only successful international languages in history have been real languages, Latin and French.

I suggest Spanish. It has the following advantages:—

- (1) It is the easiest modern language to learn.
- (2) Its spelling is almost as phonetic as that of Esperanto.
- (3) It is already spoken over a large area of the world.
- (4) Its use would cause no jealousy, as might be caused by the use of some other languages, as the Spanish-speaking nations are politically separated.

The slightly increased technical difficulty of learning Spanish as compared with Esperanto is compensated for by the fact that people will be learning a real language with a real literature behind it.—Yours, &c.,

CONSTANCE LANGDON-DAVIES.

4, Redlands View, Holmwood, Dorking, Surrey.
September 5th, 1928.

THE LAW AND SALE OF HOUSES

SIR,—As Sir Maurice Amos says, the sale of a house involves heavy legal fees.

Now if I buy a Rolls-Royce car for, say, £1,500 there are no legal extras to pay, but if I buy a house for a similar sum I and the vendor between us have to find about £50 for legal expenses (the figure is only a rough one).

Perhaps a lawyer might tell us what would be the dire consequences (to the public, not to the lawyers) if we could buy houses in the same way as we buy cars?—Yours, &c.,

"Tis."

September 25th, 1928.

THE STATE OF THE LAW—III*

By SIR MAURICE AMOS.

THERE are perhaps not more than five definite and limited subjects, in respect of which the law of England, or its administration, are, at the present day, open to serious reproach. They are: the cost of litigation; the law of real property; the privileges of the Crown and public officials; the condition of the Statute Book; and the state of the criminal law. Each one of these is a big subject; one of them is a very big subject; each of them deserves, and two, if not three, of them have received the attention of a Royal Commission or its equivalent. But the theme of this article and of its predecessors is of a more general character than the discussion of any single reform, or group of reforms. Our contention is that the law of England as a whole has got out of hand, that it needs to be recaptured, tamed, and brought back under the conscious and politic control from which it has escaped. This would still be the case if order and reason were made to reign in each of the five matters of offence referred to above. If litigation were to be rendered reasonably cheap, if our Crown law were to be assimilated to that of Australia, our law of real property to that of Germany, and the form of our Statute Book to that of Massachusetts, and if the project, so weightily and so frequently recommended, for a criminal code were to be realized, our law would still remain a labyrinth for the profession, and for the laity a Sibylline book, inaccessible to their understanding or criticism. There would still be no chance of our legal system being able to compete on equal terms with its rivals in the open market of the world. For there is an open market, and one in the trade of which it might be supposed that we should be concerned to have our share. Take China, for instance. That when China settles down she will, like Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Siam, and Japan before her, seek to adopt some system of European law, is almost a certainty. And as things stand at present in the legal world, the palm will, in all probability, be awarded to Germany. A fifth part of the human race will then be asking for civilized codes; and, however free, as we may hope, the Chinese will be from any political bias against England, it is certain that no proposal that they should adopt the laws of this country will be taken into serious consideration. They will probably vote for Germany; and where German law goes, there will go not only German trade, but the German language, and German intellectual and political influence. A similar process, favourable to France, may be seen at work throughout all those wide areas of the world which have taken their law from Paris. It has been said, possibly with some exaggeration, that our failure to digest and to recogitate our law has done more to hinder the spread of a just measure of British influence in the world than all our merchants and administrators have done to promote it.

And we must remember that if London is to retain in the days before us any claim to being the intellectual capital of the English-speaking world, it cannot be content to live upon its past. Leadership is yielded only to superior energy—and time and occasion are passing by.

What is to be done? Are we capable of the necessary labour? Is the task too big for us? It is not a small one, nor easy, nor short. A national review of the law would take a generation, at a moderate estimate, to carry through. Even to get it under way would call for no small expenditure of mental and moral effort. Whether the public, or a sufficiently influential minority of the public, can be waked from its "dogmatic slumber" it is not easy to say. The

presumptions are not favourable, for our educated classes to-day have a strong conservative bias; and it is a defect of the conservative mind not readily to appreciate the importance of keeping reform in its own hands, and not to realize that to fear change is to fear time.

But let us make an act of faith, if only on this page, and suppose that a political party, and eventually a Government, has been persuaded to put the Reform of the Law upon its agenda. How should it go about the business? Our submissions would be: (1) that the work must be done, primarily and mainly, by the legal profession; (2) that the necessary collaboration of Parliament should be confined to non-technical supervision; (3) that the work should be "institutionalized"; and (4) that it should be conducted in accordance with a comprehensive and long-period programme.

The lawyers must do the work, because they alone know the ropes; and it would, we believe, be a mistake to think that the legal profession is too deeply infused with conservatism to be able to bring to bear upon the problems of reform the fresh and critical imagination which is needed. We believe that the conservatism of lawyers—if by conservatism is meant a form of intellectual cataract—though it is undoubtedly endemic in the profession, may be exaggerated. It is true, of course, that many lawyers dislike the law so much that they think about it no more and no longer than they can help—an aversion, by the way, which is perhaps less to the discredit of the contemner than of the contemned. But a moderate degree of dislike is not necessarily a disqualification in a critic. The real explanation of a certain apparent apathy or insensibility which the public sometimes imagines it can detect in the attitude of lawyers, is mainly due, we believe, to a simple cause. They have never been put on their mettle. They do not believe that reform or even criticism is their business. Paradoxical as it may seem, the profession of the law, as such, exercises singularly little influence on legislation in this country—for the fact that eminent lawyers are often to be found upon the Treasury Bench has nothing to do with the question: they are not generally there as lawyers, and their profession is, if anything, an embarrassment to them. Barristers and solicitors have not the sense which the doctors and the services have that the nation looks to them for guidance in the matters on which they have specialist knowledge; and the profession is so far from being organized to discharge any such function, that one might almost say that it is organized to make it difficult. We propose then, as a new departure, that both branches of the legal profession should be invited by the nation to undertake a conspicuous responsibility for the form and substance of the law. To realize this object it would be necessary to set up a permanent statutory authority for the Review of the Law: on which body, in order to fix their responsibility, the lawyers should have a majority—both seniors and juniors, members of the Bar, solicitors, and teachers—with a chairman so adequate that he would be difficult to find. To the lawyers should be added a sufficient number of laymen—preferably for the most part Members of Parliament, in order so far as possible to bridge the gulf between Westminster and the Temple. This Commission would be designed for permanency: for not only may it be anticipated that its primary task would occupy it for thirty years at least; but it must also have the duty of periodically bringing its already completed labours up to date: for no scheme for the methodizing of legislation will be watertight which does not provide for perpetual change. In short, our proposed authority is to be a General Staff for the Law.

A major problem will be the proper adjustment of the

* The previous articles in this series appeared in our last two issues.

relations between the Standing Commission and Parliament. If the plans and drafts of the Commission were destined to be revised in detail by Parliamentary Committees before they could take effect, the whole project would be destined to certain shipwreck and should not be undertaken. It would be essential that Parliament should exercise self-restraint like that shown by the Reichstag, which, when the draft Civil Code was laid before it after being discussed in public for twenty years, contented itself with debating two clauses. It would be desirable that Parliament should bind itself, by suitable standing orders, not to revise the work of the Commission except *en bloc*, on grounds of general policy. That it is not incapable of such a self-denying ordinance is shown by the respectful manner in which it voted the Property Acts. And it may be remembered that when, in 1885, Lord Randolph Churchill proposed to Lord Salisbury that their Government should take up the reform and codification of the Criminal Law, he was so conscious of the necessity of some such delegation that he recommended that the task should be entrusted to a statutory body of lawyers, whose code, drawn in accordance with certain general resolutions of both houses, should, after being on the table for six months, become, *ex vi facti*, the Criminal Code of the United Kingdom. For it to be possible to invest the Commission with the *de facto* authority of a delegated legislature, it would be essential both that its proposals should be published to the world for an ample time before final revision, and that it should studiously abstain from tackling subjects of an essentially political character.

But before any such Commission as we have imagined could embark upon its task, it would be necessary for decisions to be taken on broad policy. It would be necessary to decide, for example, if we are to have codes; how we are to secure better co-operation in the making and interpretation of statutes between Whitehall, Parliament, and the judges; and whether there are not sea-walls to be built to prevent the invasion of case-law where it is not wanted. For these general decisions, and for the framing of the programme and *modus operandi* of the permanent commission, it would be desirable to set up a temporary committee of a very authoritative and representative character. It should have for its chairman, let us say, Lord Balfour; and among its members we should like to see Mr. Wells, Mr. Keynes, Professor Eddington, Mr. Sidney Webb, Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, and the editors of the *ECONOMIST* and the *FINANCIAL TIMES*. Bacon, thou should'st be living at this hour!

RED HUNTERS OF THE RIVER-SIDE

I WAS on the bank of a famous trout stream with eye and ear alert for signs of a rising fish. June had given way to July: but it was not July weather. The wind, which had blown almost without pause for nearly a week, from time to time reached the force of a gale and heavy scuds of rain alternated with bursts of sunshine. I had been fishing a rising fish without success, and thought I had put him down, when an unusually heavy downpour decided me to run for shelter. I was reeling up my line when I heard, through the turmoil, the "clop" of a feeding fish, and turning saw the ripple of the rise of my friend whom I believed to be sulking below. Rain or no rain, I decided to try again, and I knelt upon the bank to watch for his next rise. I did not see it because the tail of my eye caught another movement further up stream, and there, trotting across the foot-bridge, with his head held high like

a good retriever, was a stoat carrying a young moorhen about three parts grown. Straight over the bridge he went and disappeared among some bushes on the far side, on his way, no doubt, to feed a hungry family. It was an incident of, perhaps, half a minute's duration, for, though he showed no signs of haste, he trotted briskly, making nothing of his burden, which must have weighed nearly as much as himself, and, as I watched him, my memory carried me back to other July days on another trout stream, where I had first observed stoats hunting moorhens.

That was during a very hot spell somewhat later in July. I was on a fishing holiday, and for some days I had noticed that the moorhens were very restless. I imagined that they were being hunted by rats which, as is usual in a hot summer, were numerous along the banks of the stream. Then one day, as I stood still beside a pool, looking out for a rise, I heard a great commotion in some bushes on the far bank, and a moorhen, with every feather standing up, like a broody hen that has just been taken off the nest, fluttered into the pool squawking in great agitation. Almost immediately a stoat splashed in behind her, then, probably because it saw me, hastily swam back to cover. The moorhen became calmer and soon swam away. I imagined that the stoat had fallen in accidentally in the heat of the chase, and chuckled to myself over his *faux pas*. I was soon to learn that it was no accident.

A day or two later, I was walking very quietly along the bank of the stream, rod in hand, when my eye was attracted by a bright red patch in the grass not far ahead of me, and almost at the same moment half a dozen pointed snouts popped up from it and I realized that I had surprised a family of stoats asleep in the sun. I waited to see what they would do, expecting them to make off in the opposite direction. I heard the soft rippling call of the parent stoat, practically indistinguishable from that of a ferret, and to my surprise the party advanced towards me. The reason was soon apparent: the field had been recently mown and the nearest cover was a large clump of rushes to my right front, some three or four yards distant, on the river's edge. The family of stoats was on my left, some fifteen yards further up stream: there was one old one and five well-grown young, one of which was a good deal smaller than the rest. They came boldly towards me, in double file, the parent stoat with the smallest young one leading. I stood motionless, and, as they passed between me and the water, they turned their heads and kept their eyes fixed upon me like soldiers passing the saluting point. Then, when they had passed me, they dived into the clump of rushes. I did not budge. There was no other cover for some distance, and I hoped to see them emerge from the clump and pass on. After a while I again heard the call of the parent stoat, and then a very gentle splash, and next I saw the whole family swim across the stream to the other side, where there was abundant cover, for all the world like a pack of miniature otter hounds except that the old stoat kept a firm grip on the neck of the smallest of the party all the way. I watched them disappear into the herbage on the far side, and I never saw them again as a family.

But that was not the end of my experience of stoats that summer. Only a few days later, and not far from the scene of this family adventure, my attention was attracted by what, at first sight, I thought to be a fight between two moorhens in the middle of a broad deep carrier. Such fights are not unusual, for they are very quarrelsome birds; but, as fishing was slack and unprofitable, I strolled over to view the bout at close quarters if I could; and I was able to get quite close and to see a stoat killing a full-grown moorhen in deep water. He had the bird firmly by

the throat, and by the time I arrived its struggles were already feeble and the stoat was towing it towards the bank, where it proceeded to drag it into a rat-hole. The bird was a tight fit, and I could see that the stoat was tugging hard to get it down. On a sudden impulse I approached very quietly, knelt on the bank, took the bird by the legs, and began to pull in the opposite direction. I wanted to see whether I could make the stoat come out, just as, when ferreting, one may lure out a shy ferret by letting it fasten its teeth in a dead rabbit. The stoat hung on for a while, hissing just like a ferret; but suddenly it took alarm, let go, and retreated. I replaced the dead bird half way into the hole as I had seen it, and went away. Returning half an hour later, I found no trace of it beyond a few stray feathers.

Foolish, heedless people talk of the cruelty of stoats, but what nonsense is such talk. A stoat hunts because he is hungry or has a hungry family to feed. From similar motives men kill cattle, sheep, and swine; they train the stoat's cousin, the ferret, to hunt rabbits for their profit or their sport; they shoot, they fish, they hunt, for their amusement. I do not blame them: still less do I blame the stoat, as bold, cunning, active, and gallant a little hunter as ever followed a line. The scheme of nature is cruel, if you please; but let none blame Nature's creatures for following the instincts she gave them, and holding their own, as best they can, in the hard struggle for existence.

MORYS GASCOYEN.

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"BY CANDLE LIGHT," at the Prince of Wales, is a Viennese farce adapted by Captain Harry Graham. The plot is a variation of the old theme of servants pretending to be their employers and *vice versa*. It is all mildly amusing, and the differences in behaviour between the two classes are not exaggerated. But this sort of play needs to go with a bang. A touch of caricature is required. When Mr. Ronald Squire gives this he is delicious. Mr. Leslie Faber hardly gives it at all, and behaves more like a bishop than a rake. Both actors have got a fine French polish on their work; most of the time, like the drawings in *PUNCH*, they are life-like, but only amusing by reason of the text. Miss Yvonne Arnaud gives far the best performance: she is one of the best comedians on the English stage. The whole entertainment suffers from the absence of an energetic producer. Farce needs a rhythm, which this one is never given. And the set in which it is played is not only unnecessarily vulgar in itself, but the worst possible background for the actors. I do not think there is one square yard of unbroken surface; even the carpet is closely patterned. I left the theatre with aching eyes.

"The Lord of the Manor," Mr. John Hastings Turner's new play at the Apollo, is a very entertaining little jibe at the expense of most sections of the community. We are introduced, in an almost flawless first act, to a typical English "family of position," such as one has met in a hundred plays and not a few country houses. Everyone is continually being asked if they wish to play something, the *Times* is subscribed for but not read, and sows are the one vital topic of conversation. Upon this conservative paradise bursts one Bartlett, yesterday rejected grocer to the household, to-day local representative of the Workers' Interim Council, by whom the Government has been overthrown. Socialism in Our Time is the cry of the moment, and its expression is found in the billeting of three non-descripts on the august Sir Henry Bovey. The cook objects, and Sir Henry reacts in the opposite direction by treating the newcomers as his guests. All very unconvincing as a revolution, but excellent food for high comedy not untainted with burlesque, and, from the dramatist's point of

view, an adequate means of bringing together characters who might otherwise have found some difficulty in meeting. There is some first-rate acting from Mr. Frank Cellier as the choleric lord of the manor, Miss Alix Frizell as his Maggie-Wylie spouse, and a longish list footed by Mr. Frank Bertram as a second Doolittle.

* * *

We all wish well to the Everyman Theatre which has kept its head above water under very difficult circumstances and given us some very good plays, old and new. It is painful therefore not to be able to speak more warmly of their first production of the season, "*Ginevra*," by an Italian playwright, Forzano. If the play is at all amusing in the original, it must have been greatly changed in the adaptation, and I thought, perhaps wrongly, that I saw signs of this. As it was, neither the play nor the production nor the acting seemed exhilarating, though Miss Rénée Kelly acted the chief part with considerable charm. The production wobbled badly between Hammersmith and Realism, while the second half of the play did not seem about the same problem as the first. Let us hope the Everyman will do better next time.

* * *

Plays about the Emperor Paul I. are deservedly popular. They are not generally very good plays, but they make good entertainments. "*Such Men are Dangerous*," by Alfred Neumann (adapted by Ashley Dukes), is a good entertainment. The production was not so good as was the case with Komisarjevsky's production of Merejkovsky's play at the Court, either in the manipulation of stage business, such as the murder of the Czar, or in a more general way. At the Duke of York's, it was not till the evening was half finished that the producer made up his mind that the play was straight melodrama, not vaguely high-brow. There were occasional passages of "fine writing" that not unnaturally misled him. Left to itself the story is a good one, and theatrically effective. Mr. Matheson Lang cut a fine figure as rather a romantically minded Pahlen and Mr. Robert Farquharson was highly pictorial as the Emperor. The whole effect would have been considerably improved by more ingenious production.

* * *

Nothing could be more tame than the recently opened exhibition of the "Pandemonium Group" at the Beaux Arts Galleries, Bruton Place; such a set of "devils let loose" need hardly disturb our equanimity or cause us more than, at the worst, a few moments' mild boredom. They seek to seduce us with old-fashioned insipidities, with bold modernisms, with cleverness, with mysteriousness, but not one of them has the originality or the force to administer even the gentlest pin-prick of shock, moral or æsthetic, nor yet, one might add, to give pleasure or amusement. Mr. Teixiera Barbosa is perhaps the most competent technically; he has a pretty, if commonplace, method of formalized draughtsmanship which might be effective in magazine illustrations and which descends occasionally to the most banal vulgarity. Mr. Nicholas Bentley and Mr. Eliot Hodgkin have both a certain talent for a conventional "likeness," and (in the case of Mr. Bentley) for caricature; their other works are also of the magazine-illustration type. Mr. Angus Grant has hankerings after the mysticisms of the late Mr. Sims, Miss Kathleen Garnham contributes spiritless and rather washy water-colour landscapes; Mr. G. Pollard paints timidly, but in a bold, flat style which would be more suitable for a poster than an oil picture.

* * *

Things to see and hear in the coming week:—

Saturday, September 29th.—

Mark Hambourg, Recital, Queen's Hall, 3.

London String Quartet, Æolian Hall, 3.15.

Katharine Goodson, Chamber Concert, Wigmore Hall, 3.

League of Arts' Choir, Sea Songs and Shanties, Victoria and Albert Museum, 3.

Sunday, September 30th.—

Mr. C. Delisle Burns on "Is War Unlikely?" South Place, 11.

R.A.D.A. Players in "England's Elizabeth," by M. St. Clare Byrne, R.A.D.A. Theatre.

Monday, October 1st.—

"Taken by Storm," by Mr. H. E. S. Davidson, at the Globe.

Agnes Maxwell, Song Recital, Æolian Hall, 8.15.

Tuesday, October 2nd.—

Adila Fachiri, Violin Recital, Wigmore Hall, 8.30.

Miss V. Sackville-West, on "Modern English Poetry," the Wireless, 6.

Wednesday, October 3rd.—

"Topsy and Eva," a musical comedy version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," at the Gaiety.

Thursday, October 4th.—

"In the Next Room," by Miss Eleanor Robson and Miss Harriet Ford, at the New Scala (Baltic Amateur and Operatic Society, October 4th-6th).

Mrs. M. A. Hamilton, on "New Novels," the Wireless, 7.

Mr. Vernon Bartlett, on "The Way of the World," the Wireless, 9.15.

OMICRON.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

THE ATHENÆUM, OCTOBER 1ST, 1828.

WE are rejoiced to think that the Church of England is not entirely possessed by the two parties whose fierce rivalry has done so much to destroy its peace and usefulness. A set of men, as educated and accomplished as any of the High Church faction, without their worldly and grasping spirit—as zealous as any of the Evangelical party without their intolerance—who believe that they can be Christians without hating their brethren, and Churchmen without valuing the gold above the altar which sanctifies it—is silently but rapidly gaining ground, even in the public opinion of this sect-loving country. These devoted and excellent men, the legitimate successors of the Hookers and the Herberts who adorned the Establishment in its early days, have been the instruments of kindling a feeling of religion in the minds of the unthinking and the indifferent, which "all the sea of the gall and bitterness" of other teachers of Christianity has not been able to drown.

London Amusements.

MATINEES FOR THE WEEK.

DRURY LANE. Wed. & Sat., 2.30.

FORTUNE. Thurs. & Sat., 2.30.

GARRICK. Wed., Thurs. & Sat., 2.15.

SHOW BOAT.

"NAPOLEON'S JOSEPHINE."

THE CONSTANT NYMPH.

LONDON PAVILION. Tues. & Thurs., 2.30.

ROYALTY. Thurs. & Sat., 2.30.

THIS YEAR OF GRACE.

BIRD IN HAND.

THEATRES.

ALDWYCH. (Gerrard 2304.)

NIGHTLY, at 8.15.

Matinees, Wednesdays and Fridays, 2.30.

"PLUNDER." A New Farce by Ben Travers.

Mary Brough, Winifred Shotter, and RALPH LYNN.

DRURY LANE. (Temple Bar 7171).

8.15 precisely.

Wed., Sat., 2.30.

"SHOW BOAT." A New Musical Play.

DUKE OF YORK'S. (Ger. 0313.)

EVGS., 8.30. MATS., WED., SAT., 2.30.

MATHESON LANG

ISOBEL ELSOM

and Robert Farquharson in

"SUCH MEN ARE DANGEROUS."

FORTUNE (Temple Bar 7373.)

"NAPOLEON'S JOSEPHINE."

EDITH EVANS.

ATHENE SEYLER.

LESLIE BANKS.

LEON QUARTERMAINE.

NIGHTLY, at 8.30.

MATS., THURS. & SAT., 2.30.

GARRICK. (Gerrard 9513.)

NIGHTLY, at 8.15.

Revival of "THE CONSTANT NYMPH."

Produced by BASIL DEAN.

Mats.: Wed., Thurs. & Sat., 2.15.

HIPPODROME, London. Evenings, at 8.15.

Gerrard 0650.

MATINEES, WEDS., THURS. & SATS., at 2.30.

"THAT'S A GOOD GIRL."

JACK BUCHANAN.

KATE CUTLER.

LYRIC THEATRE. Hammersmith.

EVERY EVENING at 8.20.

"SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER."

Produced by NIGEL PLAYFAIR.

MATINEES, WED., THURS., & SAT., at 2.30.

Riverside 3012.

ROYALTY. (Ger. 2690.)

EVENINGS, 8.30. MATS., THURS. & SAT., 2.30.

BARRY JACKSON presents

"BIRD IN HAND."

A Comedy by JOHN DRINKWATER.

ST. MARTIN'S. (Gerr. 1243 & 3416.)

HUGH WAKEFIELD.

"KNIGHT ERRANT." By Eric Forbes Boyd.

Evenings, at 8.40. Matinees, Tuesday and Friday, at 2.30.

THEATRES.

SAVOY. Evenings, 8.30. Matinees, Monday, Wednesday & Thursday, 2.30.

"YOUNG WOODLEY."

FRANK LAWTON.

KATHLEEN O'REGAN.

SHAFTESBURY.

(Gerr. 6666.)

SMOKING.

NIGHTLY, at 8.30. MATINEES, WED. & SAT., at 2.30

"THE SQUEAKER."

A Scotland Yard Drama, by EDGAR WALLACE.

THE OLD VIC. Reopened. Hop 3424.

NEXT WEEK.

MONDAY, WED. & FRI., at 7.30. MATINEE, THURS., at 2.

"THE VIKINGS"

Thurs. & Sat., 7.45, "Lohengrin." Mat., Sat., 2.30, "Madame Butterfly."

WYNDHAM'S. (Reg. 3028.)

EVERY EVENING, at 8.30.

JOHN GALSWORTHY'S "LOYALTIES."

LEON M. LION.

ERIC MATURIN.

LAWRENCE HANRAY.

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DAILY, 2 to 10.45. (SUNDAYS, New Programme, 6 to 10.30.)

October 1st, 2nd & 3rd. HENRY EDWARDS in "THE FAKE"; Tom Wilson in "HAM AND EGGS." Stage: RAIE DA COSTA, "The Parlophone Girl."

October 4th, 5th & 6th. ESTHER RALSTON and Hedda Hopper in "LOVE AND LEARN"; GEORGE SYDNEY in "CLANCY'S KOSHER WEDDING." Stage: CARLOS AMES, A.R.C.M.

THE WORLD OF BOOKS

THROUGH GERMAN EYES

THE Tragedy of Edward VII.: A Psychological Study," by Dr. W. H. Edwards (Gollancz, 18s.) and "The Memoirs of Prince Max of Baden" (Constable, 2 vols., 42s.) are two books which issue from Germany and are translations from the German. Dr. Edwards is of Irish extraction, but was born in Germany, has been editor of the *KÖLNISCHE ZEITUNG*, and is now London correspondent of the *VOSSISCHE ZEITUNG*. Prince Max, as everyone knows, was the upright and humane heir-apparent to the Grand Duchy of Baden who, when the Kaiser and his General Staff had carried Germany over the brink of the precipice, was summoned to the ungrateful and, as it proved, impossible task of pulling her back again out of the abyss. To the student of the war and of the diplomatic history which preceded it, of the characters of kings, emperors, and statesmen and of the parts which they played in causing or prolonging the catastrophe, these books are of unusual interest. Of all the war memoirs by politicians or warriors, Prince Max's are, in many ways, the best. The author was, unfortunately, not quite clever enough or strong enough to carry the rôle for which history cast him; with the best instincts and intentions, he was never able completely to free himself from the conventional unrealities and the historical illusions of his class, a psychology which might have been no handicap to a German Chancellor in ordinary times, but which was fatal when four years on the Western Front and imminent defeat had stripped the last poor little bit of tinsel off even the All-Highest. But none of the chief actors in those events has written with such frankness and honesty or with equal fairness and charity about them; and certainly no statesman was called upon to face so agonizing and dramatic a crisis as the unfortunate Prince Max. If he had been rather less good a German and a German prince, he might have come out of it all more successfully, but then his memoirs might have been less dramatic and even less instructive.

* * *

Prince Max might well have called his memoirs "The Tragedy of Wilhelm II.," for the Kaiser is the real hero of his drama. He is practically never on the stage, but his absurd figure, ominously in the background with Ludendorff or Groener and the General Staff, is the centre of the tragedy which might appositely be given the subtitle "Will he abdicate?" Prince Max is amazingly loyal to the Kaiser and his military entourage—it is the loyalty of people like him that the world of kinds and war-lords has always traded on and betrayed, ever since David set his servant Uriah the Hittite in the forefront of the hottest battle. But his immensely detailed narrative of the events of the forty days preceding November 9th, 1918, which occupy the 370 pages of his second volume, starkly reveal Ludendorff and the soldiers vacillating between ruthlessness and mere panic, between obstinate stupidity and treacherous obstruction to the only course which might have saved Germany, while the wretched Wilhelm, with his army beaten and broken, his fleet mutinous, his people driven by despair to revolution, gesticulates in the background: "I will never abdicate," and, when every sane and loyal adviser assures him that only his abdication can save his subjects from complete ruin, replies that he will lead his army back into Germany in order to begin a civil war.

In his first volume Prince Max has a good deal to say from time to time on the subject of war guilt. I think that, looking at the question through German eyes, he under-estimates the responsibility of the Austrian and German Governments and the evil effect on European policy of the windy-headed, sabre-rattling Kaiser. But it is illuminating to see how the question presents itself to so fair-minded a German statesman. Dr. Edwards also sees history through German eyes, though his vision of Edward VII. is almost exactly the opposite to that which commends itself to the great majority of Germans. His book is a curious one. I think that he is quite wrong in his view of Edward's abilities and of the part which he played in British and in world politics. His book is, therefore, fundamentally unsound, and yet it is written with such ability and coherence that it is very interesting. Dr. Edwards maintains that Edward was a great political genius; he often compares him to Frederick the Great. The tragedy was that he was first subjected by the Prince Consort and the Queen to the most rigid and inhuman system of education and then, by the Queen's jealousy, prevented from playing that part in public affairs for which his abilities so eminently fitted him. When at last he was able to do so, he showed himself a much more long-sighted statesman and a far abler diplomatist than Salisbury or Lansdowne or Balfour or Grey or Asquith. This thesis is worked out with considerable ingenuity, and Dr. Edwards's interpretation of the fifty years of European history from 1860 to 1910 in the light of King Edward's brilliance, though one may disagree with it, is worth reading. Unfortunately, the closer you examine his account, the more obvious does it become that he has no real evidence at all for his main thesis. There is no documentary evidence that Edward took the long and sagacious view of international affairs which is attributed to him in this book, or that he ever exercised any great influence over British policy or supplied the initiative to Prime Ministers or Foreign Secretaries. The view is based purely on inference, and there are no adequate grounds for making the inference. Even in the case of the entente with France, it is improbable that the King played a prominent, much less a dominating, part. It is true that he had personal reasons for liking Paris and disliking Berlin, and just as, we know, his personal relations with the Kaiser made our public relations often more difficult with Germany, so, no doubt, his personal relations with Paris helped to smooth the way to the French agreement. Ministers used him in those public, formal, and ceremonial visits and communications which are not an unimportant accompaniment of more serious negotiations, and he was a successful performer on these occasions. That is about all there is to it, and, unless the future has some very startling revelations still to make, history will never adopt Dr. Edwards's thesis that the King was a political genius and a great orator. His judgments of the other British actors on the international stage are often interesting, but here again will appear to be heterodox to many Englishmen. He thinks that Lord Salisbury was "a man with a second-rate intellect," and he is very severe on Lord Grey. But his book, I repeat, is well worth reading.

LEONARD WOOLF.

REVIEWS

THE SKITTISH MUSE

Bonnet and Shawl. An Album. By PHILIP GUEDALLA. (Hodder & Stoughton. 12s. 6d.)

BEFORE very long, so we are told, we shall be able to dispense with regular meals: there will be no more of that gluttonous sitting down round a table to enjoy a leisurely hour of food and conversation. No. Instead of that we shall slip an unobtrusive capsule from our pocket into our mouth and absorb, while we walk down Oxford Street, enough nourishment to carry us over the next four-and-twenty hours. Very economical, digestible, and convenient. Decidedly, things are speeding up at last. What a saving of time! Life is short, and we are all in a hurry; though what the hurry is about, heavens knows, except to catch the last train to eternity. And literature, of course, must fall into line. There is too much to read; there is no time to read two volumes where twenty pages will suffice. A certain daily paper once provided, I remember, a daily suggestion for dinner-table topics: there was always some subject of immediate interest; then came, perhaps, the latest book; then followed a subject of general interest, such as the modern *versus* the Victorian woman; there was no need, in fact, why conversation should ever flag. So Mr. Guedalla's place seems assured—unless, indeed, convivial meals are to be abolished in favour of the furtive and solitary tabloid repast—since he fulfils so many of the conditions, and fulfils them so admirably.

For what could be more admirable than his latest collection? He takes six of the Victorian women—Mrs. Carlyle, Mrs. Gladstone, Mrs. Arnold, Lady Beaconsfield, Lady Tennyson, and Lady Palmerston—and with his deft and easy touch he raises them back to life. Jane, Catherine, Mary, Mary Anne, Emily, Emily—their very names seem to have been bestowed on them in their baptism to suit the purpose of Mr. Guedalla. For observe, these are nearly all of them the more submissive names; Jane alone, as is suitable, has a tart sound about it. These women, make no doubt, were essentially submissive. Even Lady Palmerston, brilliant hostess though she may have been, was, above all, an admiring woman. "Dear Harry" was beyond compare. "It is the nature of a woman," wrote Carlyle " (for she is essentially *passive*, not *active*) to cling to the man for support and direction; to comply with his humours, and feel pleasure in doing so, simply because they are his; to reverence while she loves him, to conquer him not by her force, but by her weakness, and perhaps (the cunning gypsy!) after all to command him by obeying him. . . ." So Mr. Guedalla's book, skilfully constructed on this theme, enjoys almost automatically the advantage of a certain unity. It is almost surprising that the author, resourceful and ingenious as he is, should not have hit on the Imaginary Conversation trick, and brought all these ladies together, to discuss their husbands and expound their lives in the form of dialogue. The wife of the philosopher, the wife of the headmaster, the wife of the Laureate, the wives of three statesmen—what rich comedy would have been ready for Mr. Guedalla to overhear as he eavesdropped at their tea-table!

But stay: his ingenuity has not wholly resisted temptation. Lady Muriel James, Sophia Swinburne, Julie de Goncourt: these are the creations of his fancy. Henry James married to the tall daughter of an earl; Swinburne to a barmaid; the Goncourts both married, in perfect though incestuous accord, to the same young lady of undetermined profession who was to furnish them with "copy." Mr. Guedalla is full of ideas. They are very good ideas, and he carries them out with his accustomed flash. We read; and as we read we are entertained. We admit that Mr. Guedalla is on intimate terms with the tenth Muse, "the skittish Muse," as he himself calls her, "of intimate biography"; he knows how to treat the lady, with all the nonchalance of the habitual loungeur in ladies' *cabinets de toilette*. And yet . . . and yet . . . It is not merely the healthy appetite, but also the fastidious taste, which remains unsatisfied by so condensed a diet. There is something to be said for the tabloid if you are in a hurry; but there is also something to be said for not being in a hurry; and there are still, thank heaven, some of us who prefer our dinner to be cooked in

the old-fashioned way and our books to be something more than a mere peep under a bonnet and a jaunty twitch at a shawl.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST.

THE CULT OF BLAKE

Blake's Innocence and Experience: A Study. By JOSEPH H. WICKSTEED. (Dent. 21s.)

William Blake. By PHILIPPE SOUPAULT. Translated by J. LEWIS MAY. (Lane, The Bodley Head. 5s.)

ON either side of the Atlantic there is growing up a solemn cult of Blake. In the case of a poet so intensely individual and so disconcertingly unequal such a cult can hardly prove to be an unmixed good; for, instead of sharpening old enthusiasms, it may ultimately dull the delicate edge alike of criticism and of enjoyment.

It was perhaps inevitable that when the prophetic books, "Urizen" and "Tiriël," "and a' the rest o' the pack," were resuscitated there should be great activity among the high priests of the cult, and that we should be invited by them to consider Blake less as a singer of strange, lovely lyrics and a draughtsman who somehow contrived to draw in four dimensions, than as a philosopher of Socratic stature, whose "message" must be patiently sought after and piously laid to heart. But one might have hoped that the "Songs of Innocence" would escape this cumbersome double process of analysis and interpretation, and even that the "Songs of Experience," by contrast with the prophetic leviathans, would seem comparatively small game to such mighty hunters. More than once this hope has proved fallacious. And now comes Mr. Joseph H. Wicksteed, urged thereto by Mr. Max Plowman, presenting us with what he himself calls "a slow-motion picture produced from the MS." of the two song-sequences.

No one could fail to admire the fervour, the fortitude, and the industry which have gone to the making of this hefty volume, where each chain of songs is examined link by link, scrutinized from every angle, subjected to almost every test that microscopy and psycho-analysis could conceivably impose. Many of Mr. Wicksteed's suggestions are new and curious. For example, he describes in the "Pretty Rose Tree," the "Sun Flower," and the "Lilly," a "tiny trilogy" representing transgression, aspiration, and beatitude, and thus reproducing the ground-plan of the "Divina Commedia." That is the sort of proposition that one cares neither to repudiate nor to embrace. And, when all is said, the threefold question obtrudes itself yet again: is it necessary to understand Blake in order to enjoy him? Is it desirable to understand him? Is it possible to understand him? The answer was, perhaps, given by Mr. Ernest H. Short when, in his admirable monograph on Blake, he wrote, "If we enjoy, we have the best he can give us, and the more so because enjoyment is closely akin to understanding."

It may not be either necessary or possible to nail a concrete meaning and a conscious message to every lyric ever written by Blake, and it would certainly be undesirable from the point of view of his devotees, for almost the only argument which could be advanced against his fundamental sanity would be this very attribute wherewith they invest him—a sustained, morbid, and fatigued preoccupation with an obscure, self-evolved philosophy of life. Better service is rendered to his genius when we remind ourselves of the many contacts between his wildness and our later wisdom: when we recollect that while ostensibly sane men were building "dark, Satanic mills," Blake was cursing them; that while ostensibly sane men goaded small boys up hot chimneys, Blake dreamed of those same boys leaping and laughing in a green plain; that while ostensibly sane men believed that the brotherhood of mankind was delimited by frontiers and conditioned by latitude, Blake's little black boy gambolled with his "Nordic" brother round the tent of God. It was not, however, in *this* world but in the *next* that the youthful chimney-sweep and the infant negro were to be made happy and set free. So it would appear that Blake was less of a moonstruck visionary than either Lord Shaftesbury or Abraham Lincoln.

An interesting point about the genius of Blake upon which little or no stress has been laid is its essential English

quality. Outside England it has long been recognized that most Englishmen are "originals," and it does not seem possible that in any other European country a man of Blake's fantastic spiritual fibre could have escaped moral and physical disaster. To Gérard de Nerval also was given that rather distressful faculty of seeing sometimes with the bodily eye what normal men see only with the eyes of the mind; but, in his case, the faculty impelled him to eschew regular habits, to lead about a live lobster, and finally to hang himself on a lamp-post. Not so Blake. He might see the Almighty looking down through a London skylight and Apostles walking on the strand at Felfham; but he continued to send out every day for his pint of porter, and to drink it like a sturdy Englishman; and he died in his bed, praising God after the fashion of St. Francis of Assisi, whom in some ways he resembled.

In M. Soupault's book, Blake is given a seat on the dais with Gauguin, Cézanne, and other Masters of Modern Art, where it is possible that, like Dr. Johnson with the hypothetical baby, he may not "much like his company." Here, of course, the author is concerned with the artist rather than with the poet. He gives unusual prominence to Blake's drawings illustrating the works of lesser men, such as those done for Young's "Night Thoughts" and Blair's "Grave." When he remarks that "all his pictures have the energy of a sudden conflagration," he lays his finger on one of the most characteristic of all Blake's tricks of vision—the trick of seeing such objects as foliage, plumage, and hair as if they were bursting into flame. The introductory sketch is good; but it can hardly be said that Golden Square was "on the outskirts of London" as late as 1757, when the greater part of Soho was already built. Nor is M. Soupault quite justified in throwing Blake's early love of Gothic art into higher relief by emphasizing "the disrepute into which the Middle Ages and all their works had fallen at the time." Gray's "Bard" was begun in the year of Blake's birth, and when the young day-dreamer began his studies with Bazire in 1771 the Romantic Revival was well under way, and the suns of more than ten summers had gilded the Round Tower at Strawberry Hill.

DOROTHY MARGARET STUART.

THE MOST CHILDISH WHITE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

Wings of Song: The Life Story of Enrico Caruso. By DOROTHY CARUSO and her sister, MRS. TORRANCE GODDARD. (Hutchinson. 16s.)

UNFORTUNATELY, Mrs. Caruso and her sister knew Caruso only during the last few years of his life and they have no real substance for a complete life of him, so, although the field of newspaper anecdote has been gleaned with more industry than judgment, the authors have had to put in great quantities of other packing. Their own family's history is the main stream in which Caruso is but a minnow, and whenever there is danger of a complete breakdown in the divagating recital, hotel proprietors and doorkeepers, policemen and company promoters are introduced casually, with a testimonial to the effect that Caruso thought well of them.

The first attempt to reach Caruso follows as queer a course as that of any Italian explorers. It goes something like this: the authors' aunt, Mrs. Walter Benjamin, who before marriage was Miss Clarina de Saint Seigne of Florence, had three daughters, for whom she engaged a governess, "Miss B."; later Miss B. became housekeeper for the author's family, the author got a sore throat, Miss B. took her to see an Italian doctor, who knew Caruso.

This meeting passes without result, and we must start again.

"Among other friends was Maestro Tanara. Caruso considered him a splendid teacher and sent him many pupils."

In simple gratitude Tanara called his son Enrico and asked Caruso to the christening. The future Mrs. Caruso was not asked, but at the last moment many more guests arrived than there were teaspoons for in Tanara's house.

"We were the nearest acquaintances, and I was delighted to send over some silver spoons that belonged to my grandmother. In return for the spoons I was invited to the party."

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Of this casual meeting with Caruso we are told:—

"It seemed ages till he reached me and took my hand in his. We both knew at that moment that our lives would be united."

What other few direct appearances Caruso makes in the book are no more convincing than this first one.

Many more pages are filled with such information as: that the author's father had conservative ideas and always took his daughters away from a dance at eleven o'clock; that he had a library and read a lot; that the author, like Miss Dolores del Rio, was educated in a convent; that her father strongly opposed her marriage.

"He dwelt upon the difference in tradition. Enrico came of a peasant family. My ancestors, he reminded me, were among the early settlers of New York and New England, and were ladies and gentlemen."

Her brother, Romeyn, was in the Marines, and wounded at Belleu Wood. "My sister's husband, Frederic Goddard, was at Camp Upton, waiting orders to sail, and my cousin, Rogers Benjamin, was in the Aviation Corps." The author "worked at the Red Cross," and sold Liberty Bonds. As for Caruso, it is recorded that his singing of "Over There" caused hysterical crowds to jump on their seats and wave flags. Such a pie can be treated only as Jack Horner would treat it, picking the best plum out for admiration. There is a letter from Otto Kahn that would have the place of honour, but it is too long. This Poe story is almost as good:—

"Knowing that father was fond of books, Enrico steered the conversation politely from the Opera to Literature. He had bought a portrait of Edgar Allen Poe that afternoon, and soon he and father were discussing that writer. We have always had a special interest in Poe in our family because as a young man, unknown and rather wild, he came to see my grandfather, Park Benjamin, then associated with Horace Greeley. Grandfather immediately recognized his ability, loaned him money, and otherwise encouraged him, until the erratic young genius found his feet under him and began to publish his work. My grandfather did not live to see his protégé become famous, but it was a curious coincidence that, unknowingly, Caruso should have chosen to speak of him and to admire him."

AUSTRIA FELIX

A Wayfarer in Austria. By G. E. R. GEDYE. (Methuen. 7s. 6d.)

A WAYFARER in Austria to-day is a wanderer within narrow confines. Evil days have fallen upon the land, and new times must bring new adjustments to destiny. *Bella gerant alii*—but Austria ignored the counsel and paid the price. *Tu felix Austria nube*—but not marrying to the point of polygamy will bring back lost prosperity now. The kings that might have done the marrying are gone, along with the captains, and the empire turned republic must find new paths to fortune.

Mr. Gedye has incidentally shown her one of them. He by no means set out to do it. His concern was with his own paths, not Austria's. Living in the country for years as a journalist, he has wandered and wayfared through the country for the best of all possible reasons, sheer love of it. The end of it all is a book, a book so much the better in that its author obviously never started with the fixed purpose of writing one.

The book thus begotten must to a certainty have results. People will read it. At any rate they will begin to read it, and it cannot be imagined that having got so far they will put it down till the last page is reached. If they have been to Austria already they will be all of an itch to be off there again. If, on the other hand, their first visit is still to come, they will vow on the spot that it shall come within a week or a month or whatever period the practical possibilities of the case may dictate.

That is a satisfactory result for a book to have, and if enough books are written about Austria, and all of them are as good as Mr. Gedye's (which is unlikely), the entertainment of alien guests may in time prove as profitable to the shrunken Republic as the marrying of alien princesses was to the proud Empire. Mr. Gedye himself has little to say, rightly enough, about the transition and the contrasts. He is not concerned with politics here, whatever traffic he may have had with them in other spheres. After all, the lakes are the lakes and the mountains the mountains, whether Francis Joseph or Herr Renner or Monsignor Seipel guide Austria's fortunes. And mountains and lakes, churches and taverns, the searching charm of Salzburg, the personality, as it were, of Graz and Kitzbühel or Velden, these make the Austria that throws open her gates to the traveller to-day.

For a while you begin to think that for Mr. Gedye Austria is just Vienna. If it were you would not judge him too severely. The man who knows that marvellous capital as Mr. Gedye does takes grave risks in beginning to write about it all. Even the obvious, the Stephanskirche, the Ringstrasse, the Prater, the Hofburg—never to forget the incomparable Sacher's—is enough to carry the pen running incontinently on till the limits of any ordinary volume are reached and overstepped. To make matters worse, while Mr. Gedye is conscientious over the obvious, his real enthusiasms are often for something never obvious to anyone before—that little old Gothic tavern in a street you would never think of turning into, that crumbling church hidden away in the something or other-gasse, or, best of all perhaps, the restaurants where the wine and the schnitzel make a meal for a sybarite at the price of a club lunch in Pall Mall.

Anyone who writes a book about a country must conform perforce to certain conventions. Even a wayfarer cannot ramble always and only just where the fancy takes him. He has to cover all the ground more or less, and be religious over museums and statues and armour. That is as it must be. Even Mr. E. V. Lucas, prince of all wayfarers, produces something quite a little like guidebooks. After all, if we are to be lured away to Austria, as we shall be, the volume that laid the spell on us must take us wherever we choose to go. And if Mr. Gedye tends a little much to architecture—baroque in particular—for some tastes, he will no doubt have given others just exactly what they want.

Guidebook or no guidebook, his volume has an individual touch which gives it definite distinction. If books of this sort are to be written—and Heaven knows we need them—this clearly is how the thing ought to be done. The writer refrains wisely from telling us what we ought to like. He simply tells us as he passes what he happens to like himself. If our own tastes are different, so be it. That is the proper democratic way, and we may take it fairly enough with Mr.

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THE BELGIAN RABELAIS

The Legend of Ulenspiegel. By CHARLES DE COSTER. Translated by F. M. ATKINSON. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

The Legend of the Glorious Adventures of Tyl Ulenspiegel. By CHARLES DE COSTER. Translated by GEOFFREY WHITWORTH. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.)

WITH the spirit of Flanders most of us have had some acquaintance. A more singular phantom does not exist. A legend more deeply immanent is not to be found. Our acquaintance will almost always have been slight and guessing, for this interior life of Flanders is jealous, and has had cause enough to be so. Marlborough comes—and Flanders, hoeing and weeding, watches the smoke and the troopers with a shrewdness which is still in the air when Ludendorff comes, and Haig. The land is crowded with foreign force and drama; but those depart and the land is not changed. One picture from 1918 haunts the reviewer's mind on this subject; the elements of it are the white bones of Ypres in view five or six miles off, and a peasant in his farmyard ordering some of his British defenders out by the simple gesture of suddenly appearing with a shotgun at his shoulder.

Ulenspiegel, the personification of this spirit, or of that element in Flanders which the people themselves may consider most characteristic and admirable, belongs to a period older than Marlborough. Originally the name was associated with many "merry conceited jests" of a general German tradition; but the splendid insight of Charles de Coster, an archæologist, journalist, and professor who died fifty years ago, discovered in it a means of giving his country her Don Quixote, her Falstaff, her allegory, and out of a shadow of universal peasantry identified in fresh colouring a hero of the soil in Flanders, during the Spanish ordeals of the sixteenth century. Together with Ulenspiegel other dominant figures represent the national faculties of Flanders in de Coster's whimsical pageant. We who perhaps saw only the outskirts and overcast expressions of Flanders here discover the stubbornness and grimness to be intermingled with fantasies and illuminations of emotion; the steeples sparkle, the market-places ring, and Burns himself might be on the road with Ulenspiegel and the well-liking Lamme Goedzak. It is a region not only of prudent landladies, and touring cultivators, but of Jolly Beggars.

The book, published originally in 1867, belongs both for extent, for experiment, for ardour, for *obiter dicta*, for symbolical strength and dual control of fact and dream to the order of "Tristram Shandy" and "Moby Dick." It is historical, but not history, the author yielding himself with the despairing confidence of unappreciated genius to the creative prejudice of patriotic vision. Like his compeers in this kind of work, he has always time: that is to say, he can enrich his journey with all sorts of minor incidents and idlings, which may appear eccentric, but in their sudden beginning and end are ministering to the lights and shadows of the central picture. The exploits of Ulenspiegel are free and various, but where they do not advance in any way the main tale of Belgium in account with Spain they keep up the zest of characterization. And, like Melville in "Moby Dick," de Coster swiftly realizes the chances afforded by so great a canvas of doing things for his own pleasure; like Melville (to take one example), he amuses himself by writing a picturesque sermon—though de Coster's is ironical. His monk, skilfully attracting money from the people of Damme, points out the magic of the coin to save sinners from the stake, and even in the midst of the bonfire, with most amazing play of imagery: "Where are the pains of the fire now? For the sea is close at hand, and straight into the sea the soul plunges. She swims on her back, on her stomach, floats upon the waves, dives beneath them. Oh, listen how she sings aloud in her joy! See how she rolls about in the water! The very angels gaze down upon her from heaven and are glad. Eagerly they await her coming; but not yet, not yet has she had her fill of the sea. If she might only turn into a fish! She knoweth not how there are prepared for

her up aloft sweet baths, perfumed and scented, with fine bits of sugar-candy floating therein, all white and fresh like bits of ice. . . ." In this exaltation of parody the *odi et amo* of all the master moralists and allegorists sounds on in bewildering beauty. De Coster adds his radiant pages to the apocrypha of the Natural History of Enthusiasm.

Of the two English editions now made generally accessible, Mr. Atkinson's is a complete translation and Mr. Whitworth's an abridgement. Both are reissues, Mr. Atkinson's work having appeared in 1922 and Mr. Whitworth's in 1918 (the latter still contains a prefatory allusion to "the interests of war-time publishing"); and, apart from the question of completeness, there is some distinction, we think, between the styles of the translators. Mr. Atkinson's is more deliberately archaic, and also more abundant in tone. Our quotation above was from Mr. Whitworth; it would be difficult to prefer either version, both being clear and reasonable. In Mr. Atkinson's book will be found one of the innumerable prefaces of Sir Edmund Gosse, which supplies valuable information and testimony to the extraordinary historical position of de Coster's book, bursting forth from a dull and feeble twilight of Flanders authorship into all its proud audacities.

E. B.

THE SPIRIT-WORLD

Sibyls and Seers. By EDWYN BEVAN. (Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.)

EMBODYING, with some additional matter, six lectures recently given in Oxford on the Speaker's Foundation for Biblical Studies, Mr. Bevan's little book is a survey, necessarily in broad outline, of some ancient theories of revelation and inspiration. His subject is not magic or religion as a whole. Obviously, within the limits imposed on him, he could not concern himself with the full range of dealings between men and the spirit-world. He has, therefore, confined his inquiry to one thing which man has always hoped to obtain by spiritual means—namely, knowledge: knowledge, that is to say, not only about the spirit-world itself, but also about the visible world, so far as it could be gained not by observation, rational inquiry, and human testimony, but by the communication of spirits. Emphasizing, to begin with, the fact that man from primitive times has believed in the existence of unseen forces beyond or behind or above the material world, he is at pains to refute the not uncommon assumption that the savage mind had no notion of a world of uniform natural law, but saw everything as supernaturally animate and moving in a capricious, incalculable way. For primitive man as for ourselves, Mr. Bevan maintains, the world was largely one of inanimate material objects governed by uniform law. Yet neither for our ancestors nor for us is this a complete account of life, for here, in the midst of material objects, moved only by external force, there is that other realm of desires, emotions, values, and thoughts existing in human consciousness. Primitive animism did not deliberately duplicate the world by supposing the existence of souls inside material things. The duplication was already there as a fact. There were dead lumps of matter; but those other "lumps of matter which moved about under the impulse of desires and emotions and values were really there visible and tangible, and their movements were plainly of a different kind from the movements of a flung stone. Spiritual causation, if we may so call it, was given to primitive man in immediate experience side by side with material causation." Belief in a spirit world has undergone many modifications; but the tradition is a continuous one.

Mr. Bevan devotes the major part of his book to an account, with illustrations and quotations drawn from a wide field of classical and modern reading, of the various ways in which ancient man sought communication with the unseen. He traces, first of all, through history and literature, the idea that denizens of this world might visit the spirit world. In the cruder form of this notion, a man in his body made a journey through space to a material country where the gods or the dead are; in the less crude form, the man's soul was temporarily separated from his body, either by death, followed by resurrection, or by a trance. Then, there was the reverse belief in the epiphanies of gods and the appearances of ghosts; while other aspects of ancient thought with which



The Conversationalists

"Glorious view, what?" "H'm!" * * * "Wonderful air here."
 "Grrm!" * * * "Grand tobacco this Three Nuns of yours." "Ah-h-h!"

* * *

The rest is silence—and

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Mr. Bevan deals are sibylline ecstasy and visionary inspiration, and, finally, the idea of a voice or a letter from heaven. Incidentally, he presents the full text of "The Letter from Heaven," of which all other epistles supposed to have been written by Christ Himself and dropped in holy places, such as Jerusalem or Rome, are variants. The first certain appearance of the Letter, it seems, was in the latter part of the sixth century, when it is known to have been read by Bishop Vincentius to his congregation in one of the Balearic Islands. But it is thought to have originated, a little earlier, in the Church of Gaul.

Of the descriptive part of Mr. Bevan's work it is enough to say that he writes concisely and lucidly, and has compressed much riches into a little room. Most of his matter will already be familiar to students; but the average intelligent reader will find much that is fresh. As for Mr. Bevan's own convictions, these—for all his fine parade of impartiality—are never for a moment in doubt. If nothing else gave him away, he would stand betrayed by his comparison between the early and the later Greeks. Dealing with the fact that interest in supernatural revelation played a much larger part in the declining days of Greece than in the great days of freedom, he is clearly on the side of the later Greeks, who, less obsessed with "patriotic ardours and active politics," were wiser in that they became more concerned to know what lay around and beyond them. Hellenic civilization, indeed, has, apart from Plato, no charms for Mr. Bevan, who detests even more strongly the modern rationalism that is our legacy from it. Mr. Bevan's theory, baldly summarized, is that communion with the unseen world has never proved capable of furnishing general knowledge, but that its value has been for the individual alone. Not in actual knowledge, but "in an immense sense of knowing," lies the virtue of mysticism. St. Paul, in sharp contrast to fabled heroes and saints who are supposed to have penetrated behind the veil, had a real glimpse of the spirit world when, as related in the second book of "Corinthians," he was "caught up to the third heaven"; and St. Paul estimated his visionary rapture at precisely its proper worth.

GILBERT THOMAS.

DR. BRIDGES ON FREE VERSE

Collected Essays, Papers, &c., of Robert Bridges. II. and III. (Oxford University Press. 2s. 6d.)

WE hear less to-day than some years ago of the many virtues of Free Verse or Cadence, but it is a ghost which still does not hesitate to walk upon the least provocation, and which needs, if not perhaps laying, at least restraining. We welcome therefore this reprint in handy form of Dr. Bridges' "Humdrum and Harum-Scarum: A Lecture on Free Verse," from the LONDON MERCURY of 1922, together with a brief note on "Poetic Diction" from an American magazine. (One gathers from the numbering of the pages that they are both to appear later as part of a larger volume.)

Dr. Bridges takes a critical attitude towards free verse. The term itself implies a throwing off of the bonds of the older metrical forms, but, he suggests, "since formlessness can have no place in Art," there must be, besides certain negative distinctions, "some positive quality imagined for it by which it will be distinguishable from prose." He proceeds by careful argument—free verse must be rhythmical: the effective distinction of metrical verse from prose lies in the greater expectancy of rhythm in the case of the former: free verse desires the freedom of prose while retaining the expectancy of metrical verse—to the standpoint that "free verse is good and theoretically defensible only in so far as it can create expectancy without the old metrical devices."

But, he asserts, from the rejection of these devices certain adverse conditions inevitably follow. For one thing, the English paucity of grammatical variations is bound, in the nature of free verse, to lead to a monotony of form precisely where variety is claimed. Again, there is the problem of the "indetermination of subsidiary accent":—

"A poem in metre has a predetermined organic normal scheme for its lines, and whatever their varieties of rhythm no line can be constructed without reference to its form; hence the same syllabic rhythms acquire different values

according to their place in the line. The indefinable delicacy of this power over the hidden possibilities of speech is what most invites and rewards the artist in his technique."

Not unallied to this is the ability of the fixed metrical form to carry without difficulty a quantity of subordinate matter, necessary but not strictly poetical, which free verse, obliged to justify itself continuously in every line and phrase, must find an intolerable burden. For each and all of these reasons—not to mention the undue self-consciousness their existence creates in the poet himself—the diction of free verse is bound to be infinitely more exacting than that of metrical verse. It is open to the "free versifier," certainly, to declare his poetry "the better for excluding phrases that are in themselves so little beautiful that they must borrow adventitious beauty from mechanical devices," the only reply being, in fact, the demand that his fruits should justify him. Dr. Bridges would agree that free verse has undoubtedly this merit—that it instantly exposes the bad poet. It has yet—at any rate among living writers—to show a great one.

"Poetic Diction in English" examines rather too hurriedly for profit "the dislike which poets of to-day exhibit towards the traditional" poetic diction, and criticizes that dislike on much the same grounds as those stated by Coleridge against Wordsworth's theories. The pages are interesting, but they suggest rather than make an essay.

On fundamental points one can rarely disagree with Dr. Bridges, though his statements seem sometimes incomplete owing to extreme brevity. He acknowledges readily that the great poet makes his own rules; he would only insist that the little poets had better keep to the old ones.

THE LAW AND PRACTICE OF NATIONS

British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. III.

—The Testing of the Entente, 1904-6. Edited by G. P. GOOCH and HAROLD TEMPERLEY. (H.M. Stationery Office. 10s. 6d.)

The Development of International Law. By SIR GEOFFREY BUTLER and SIMON MACCoby. (Longmans. 25s.)

The British Year Book of International Law, 1928. (Milford, and the Oxford University Press. 16s.)

Studies in International Law and Relations. By A. PEARCE HIGGINS. (Cambridge University Press. 15s.)

ALL these books can be recommended for the student of international law and international relations, and the second book on the list shows how important it is that the study of the one should be closely tied up to the study of the other. In the first book, however, the student will find little about international law and its theory, but a detailed history of a limited and vital period in the relations of two groups of European States. No series of documents from the archives which the war has opened for us is better edited than this which is coming from the British Foreign Office. The work of Dr. Gooch and Dr. Temperley is as good in the present as it was in former volumes. The time for startling "revelations" of pre-war diplomacy is over, and there is nothing here which is both new and of first-rate historical purpose. But the documents now published cross the historical "t's" and dot the historical "i's" in a period of great diplomatic importance. The most interesting are the papers dealing with the Anglo-French and Anglo-Belgian military and naval conversations during the year 1906, of which the records are extremely deficient, and a short diary of Lord Haldane's describing his mission to Berlin. The bulk of the book is occupied with the first Morocco crisis and the Algeiras Conference.

The other books are by international lawyers on international law, for the most part, though Professor Higgins also deals with the wider subject of relations. The book of Sir Geoffrey Butler and Mr. Maccoby is difficult to treat with justice in a short review. It is a history of the Law of Nations, written—it is claimed by the authors—on a novel principle. It is full of valuable information and will make, in many ways, an admirable textbook. Yet it is, on the whole, a disappointing work. The novelty of the authors' system, they tell us, is that they have not traced each doctrine or practice of international law separately; they hold

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that changes in international law "have been ultimately an expression of changes in the State system and in the practice of nations," and they have therefore tried "to cut into the procession of history at fixed points, to select some central theme at each stage, and to treat it in the light of history and law." The scheme is admirable, but in practice we do not think that it has worked. The book is divided into three parts, labelled "The Age of the Prince," "The Age of the Judge," "The Age of the Concert." The relevancy of the title and division to the subjects treated is often obscure except in Part III. Why, for instance, should the subject of reprisals be dealt with in Part I. and Maritime Theory and Practice in Part II.? In effect, the authors seem often to forget their scheme and merely to "trace a doctrine or practice of international law separately."

The British Year Book of International Law, now in its ninth year of issue, is even better than it has ever been before. Sir John Fischer Williams writes a convincing paper to show that, apart from treaty obligations, there is no general rule of international law by which a State is compelled not to expropriate, without compensation, foreign owners of property. Professor Brierly examines some of the important implications in the recent awards of the General Claims Commission between the United States and Mexico with regard to the liability or non-liability of Governments for the wrongful acts of private individuals and the principles governing "State complicity." Dr. McNair contributes a useful article on "When do British Treaties Involve Legislation?" and Miss Lillian Friedlander an equally useful paper on the theory and practice which has governed the admission of States applying for membership of the League of Nations.

Professor Higgins in his volume of collected lectures and addresses is better when he confines himself to international law in its narrower fields than when he strays into the broader regions of international relations. The two best papers are those on the Papacy and International Law and the Monroe Doctrine. He was ill advised to republish an address on "The Law of Nations and the War of 1914" delivered by him in 1914.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Webster's New International Dictionary. 1928 Edition. (Bell, Buckram, £3 5s.; Half Sheepskin, £4 4s.)

It is now over 120 years since Noah Webster began work on an "American Dictionary of the English Language," and it is twenty years since the "New International" first appeared. In the interval, many changes of a minor character have been made throughout the book. A 36-page supplement of New Words has now been added, to bring the vocabulary fully abreast of the times. Several hundred names have also been added to the Biographical section, and the Gazetteer has been completely revised, so as to record the thousands of changes in name, &c., resulting from the World War. Altogether, this volume of 2,740 pages contains an extraordinary mass of readily accessible information, and constitutes what is probably the best single-volume dictionary of the English language.

Young October. By EMERSON TAYLOR. (Mills & Boon. 7s. 6d.)

This is a mystery adventure story about stolen jewels, a beautiful Russian refugee princess, Bolshevik spies and tricksters, a spirited American girl, and a retired colonel of English cavalry. With the exception of the last, these people are only names. The colonel, who tells the story, represents himself as a good specimen of his type and class. But while it is conceivable that a man of his kind might say: "I ask myself sometimes, just how long are Europe and America to sit by supinely while Russia rots. Is it not the business of every decent man to oppose and crush the power of the crew whose red mark is trailed across so much of this fair old earth?" it is impossible to believe of him that he would have spent the thousand franc notes he found in the box containing the jewels or have hesitated to return the rings and the necklace to their impoverished owner. The story is told in a leisurely, gossiping manner, but it contains enough plot and action to hold the interest.

The Diaries of Mary, Countess of Meath. Edited by her HUSBAND. Illustrated. (Hutchinson. 21s.)

This volume of Lady Meath's diaries is limited to the account of her philanthropic undertakings and travels between the years 1874 and 1900. It cannot therefore be taken as a full record of her life, but it gives nevertheless a very curious account of the charitable life of a Victorian great lady. It was strenuous in the extreme. Lady Meath never ceased to found homes for Epileptic Women; for Aged Ladies; to start schemes for the good of people in work-houses; to improve cottages and to build workmen's dwellings on her husband's estate. When she went abroad, she and Lord Meath bought vast numbers of musical boxes—over nine hundred in one shop indeed—and oleographs, which they distributed in hospitals and workhouse infirmaries. Her visits to the houses of other great ladies always included prayer meetings and religious discussions. "On the way there and back Lady Ailsa talked to me almost entirely on receiving Christ. . . . Drove over to Maybole. . . . Lady Ailsa goes there once a week to read and pray with some who were drunkards." And so it goes on, both in England and in foreign countries. Once she met Lady Russell, who was anxious that her grandson (Lady Amberley's boy) should "turn out all that is nice." This is perhaps the first reference to Mr. Bertrand Russell.

NEW GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

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It is bad news that the Flonzaley Quartet will cease to exist after this year, and the loss which it will mean to the performance of the best Chamber Music is shown by their playing of a beautiful work of Mozart, the Quartet, No. 8, in D major. (Three 10-in. records. DA947-9. 6s. each.) The recording is good.

The excellence of American orchestras is shown in two records. All gramophonists now know the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra under Stokowski, which is as good as ever in Debussy's Nocturne, No. 2—Fêtes (10-in. record. E507. 4s. 6d.), though the piece has not got very much to it. They can now also introduce themselves to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which has not got the amazing finish of the Philadelphia, but is surprisingly good under Frederick Stock in two gay Strauss Waltzes, "Roses of the South" and "Wine, Women and Song" (D1452. 6s. 6d.). Another orchestral record is a "Traviata" Selection, played by Creatore's Band (C1530. 4s. 6d.).

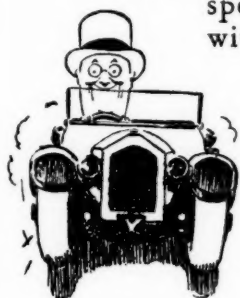
We can recommend two vocal records. Elisabeth Rethberg is one of the best of the sopranos, and she sings admirably two famous Arias from Verdi's "Aida," "O patria mia" and "Ritorna vincitor" (D1451. 6s. 6d.). The other is again Verdi, a brilliant performance by the baritone Benvenuto Franci and the La Scala Orchestra of "Era la notte" and "Credo in un Dio crudel" from "Otello" (DB1154. 8s. 6d.).

EDUCATIONAL RECORDS

THE International Educational Society and Columbia have issued their third and longest list of lecture records. They differ a good deal in merit. The best are the first of a series in which Professor Elliot-Smith lectures on "Man and Civilization" (D40032-3), and begins to expound his well-known thesis; an admirable lecture on "The Englishman through the Ages" in which Professor F. G. Parsons treats of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes (D40046-7); "Ants and their Habits," by Professor Julian Huxley (D40052-3); and another lecture by Professor H. H. Turner on "The Stars," this time on the autumn sky (D400-30-1). There are two interesting lectures by Professor Oliver Lodge on "Introduction to Physics," though his delivery is gramophonically curious, and his matter somewhat disconnected (D40042-5); Dr. Percy Buck is good, but elementary, on "How to Listen to Music" (D40050-1). Professor Fraser Harris has many interesting things to tell about Harvey and the "Circulation of the Blood," but his delivery, though clear, is a little too rapid (D40040-1). Professor Conway is a good lecturer, but there is a little too much of him in this series. First there is a second lecture by him on "Introduction to Vergil" (D40036-7); then there is the beginning of a series on "Introduction to Livy" (D40038-9); these are excellent, but we hardly think it was wise to have him again in a rather platitudinous lecture on "The Value of a Classical Training in Modern Life" (D40034-5). Finally, there is a lecture on "Victor Hugo," by Professor Denis Saurat (D40048-9). The price of each record is 4s. 6d.

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FINANCIAL SECTION

THE WEEK IN THE CITY

ARTIFICIAL SILK—SHIPPING SHARES—TIN—AUSTRALIAN FINANCE

THE most conspicuous exception to the general activity which prevails in the industrial share market is perhaps the artificial silk group. Celanese issues in particular have been flat. The drastic cuts in yarn prices made by British Celanese for the second time this year—from 6d. to 1s. a pound in April, and from 6d. to 2s. a pound this month—following on the price reductions announced by American Celanese for the United States, have thoroughly disturbed the market. Competition in the acetate silk section of the industry has increased. Courtaulds are now working their acetate plant at full capacity, and the British Acetate Silk Corporation, which took over the Bulmer Rayon organization, is now producing and selling acetate silk both here and on the Continent. The prospectus of British Acetate estimated that the production of its acetate silk plant would be up to 7 tons a week by October this year. We are told that demand in the trade is continually moving towards the finer deniers, particularly those of the multi-filament type. British Celanese is now placing on the market two new types of yarn of the multi-filament type—150 denier yarn containing 50 filaments as against the usual 26, and 75 denier containing 37 filaments against 13. An increase in the demand for fine yarns is a feature also of the market in America.

The Celanese price reductions do not appear to have affected the viscose yarns of Courtaulds. Nor has any change in yarn quotations been made by Glanzstoff in Germany. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the artificial silk industry—over-production in certain types of yarn is to be expected from time to time in an industry where productive capacity is steadily being increased while demand is continually shifting—but while the fight for control of the acetate silk trade goes on, it is clearly advisable to confine attention to the Courtaulds-Glanzstoff-Snia Viscosa group, which controls over 70 per cent. of the world's viscose artificial silk. Incidentally, Snia Viscosa shares have come down in the present reaction to 28s. It is not always realized that Snia Viscosa shares are of the nominal value of 150 lire, which is equivalent to 32s. 3d. At their present discount the shares are not an unattractive speculative investment. It is possible that in the interests of conservative finance—now that Courtaulds have a tighter hold on Snia Viscosa affairs—a dividend may be postponed for one more year, but we believe that the Snia Viscosa is holding its own and is making a fair working profit.

There is often some fun to be got in working out the "book values" and earnings of the ordinary shares of important companies. Take the four big shipping groups—Furness Withy, P. & O., Cunard, and Royal Mail. No one seriously believes that shipping companies disclose their real earnings in their profit and loss accounts or give the true market value of their assets in their balance-sheets. P. & O., for example, has apparently been paying out in dividends more than it earned, but as its net profits are shown in its profit and loss account "after depreciation," it is not really suggested that Lord Inchcape is guilty of such a financial sin. The percentages earned (after allowing for all prior charges and preference dividends) and paid (in dividends) on the ordinary share capital of these four groups, as disclosed by the last accounts, are given in the following table:—

	Furness Withy.	P. & O.	Cunard.	Royal Mail.
Per cent. earned on ord. capital at par (less tax) ...	9.19%	9.58%*	9.42%	5.13%
Per cent. paid on ordinary capital (less tax) ...	8.0%	10%*	6.0%	4.0%

* On old capital.

How do these earnings compare as percentages on the "book value" of the ordinary capital? To arrive at the book value we have calculated from the last balance-sheets the amount of net assets remaining for the ordinary capital after discharging all liabilities and repaying prior charges and preference capital. The next table gives these book values and the earnings shown as percentages thereon:—

	Furness Withy.	P. & O.	Cunard.	Royal Mail.
Par Value ...	£1	£100	£1	£100
Book Value ...	31/2	£274*	27/2	£159
Net earnings as % on book value ...	5.89%	3.49%*	6.93%	3.21%

* On old capital.

Cunard and Furness Withy come best out of this test. In the case of Royal Mail it must be presumed that the assets shown in the balance-sheet have not yet been written down to an earnings basis. It is rather surprising to find that the ratio of earnings to book value is so small as 3.49 per cent. in the case of P. & O. One would expect that if its assets had been written down, as is commonly believed, to a figure below market value, the ratio would be fairly high, unless net profits are being hidden, apart from the device of writing off depreciation.

The unexpected rise in the price of tin has brought speculative interest back to the tin share market. In THE NATION of September 1st we quoted estimates of the world production and consumption of tin compiled by the Anglo-Oriental Mining Corporation. These estimates have now been revised in the latest monthly bulletin of the Corporation in order to correct an error in the supply returns (the non-inclusion of the production of the Unfederated Malay States) which had not been entirely compensated for by an error in the consumption returns (the incompleteness of the Straits Shipments return). The revised figures for the eight months ending August, 1928, show a total world consumption of 100,782 tons and a total for world supplies of 103,217 tons. In other words there has been a surplus production of 2,435 tons. The position appears to be that production went ahead of consumption from about April, stocks (taking visible supply plus metal and ore in the Straits) increasing from 17,308 tons as at April 30th, 1928, to 21,018 tons at July 31st. Since July there has been a slight improvement, stocks declining to 20,754 tons as at August 31st. There seems some evidence that the recent rise in the metal is immediately due to concentrated buying by a bull pool leading to control of the spot position. It will be interesting to see how far these speculative accumulations are able to offset the increase of stocks which seems probable by the end of the year, unless consumption expands yet further. If there is any setback to consumption the position for the metal would be precarious, unless, of course, output were to be definitely restricted by the low prices prevailing. Shipments of 2,052 tons from Bolivia in August were the lowest since April, 1927, the monthly average up to July being 3,407 tons.

In view of the interest of THE NATION in Australian finance, a recent speech by Mr. McCormack, Premier of Queensland, in the Brisbane Parliament on September 18th deserves quotation. "The reduction of borrowing is one of the great problems which the Government of Australia must tackle. . . . Unless party politics are left out of loan money considerations, all the States of the Commonwealth will be made bankrupt. . . . The Queensland Government could make itself popular by throwing borrowed money in all directions and by giving employment, but depression cannot be cured that way." Slowly but surely political opinion in Australia is waking up to the dangers of over-borrowing.

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